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SPECIAL READERS' OFFER
SEE P.37



78 DRIVER 70's cars, 90's gameplay, with a score somewhere in between.



46 THE NOMAD SOUL It's French, it features David Bowie and it involves possessing the bodies of others. Did we say it was French?



50 NOCTURNE Boo! Mwuagh ha ha ha ha ha ha.



91 INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL 2000 Microsoft do the FIFA thing.

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It's what gaming is really all about. Moments.

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WIN THE
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PC GAMES**
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ON THE CD

FULL DETAILS
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That silvery thing on the cover is loaded with great demos, patches and helpful files guaranteed to ensure you get more out of your PC

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Charlie Brooker's got a big box – and he's not very happy about it

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WIN!

THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds (82), PC ZONE, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.** The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The Ed's decision is final. Closing date: Friday 8 October 1999. The winner of our October (#81) cover compo was P R Brathwaite, from Billingham, who wins something from the ZONE prizes cupboard for sending in the correct answer (*Soldier Of Fortune*) to last month's little teaser

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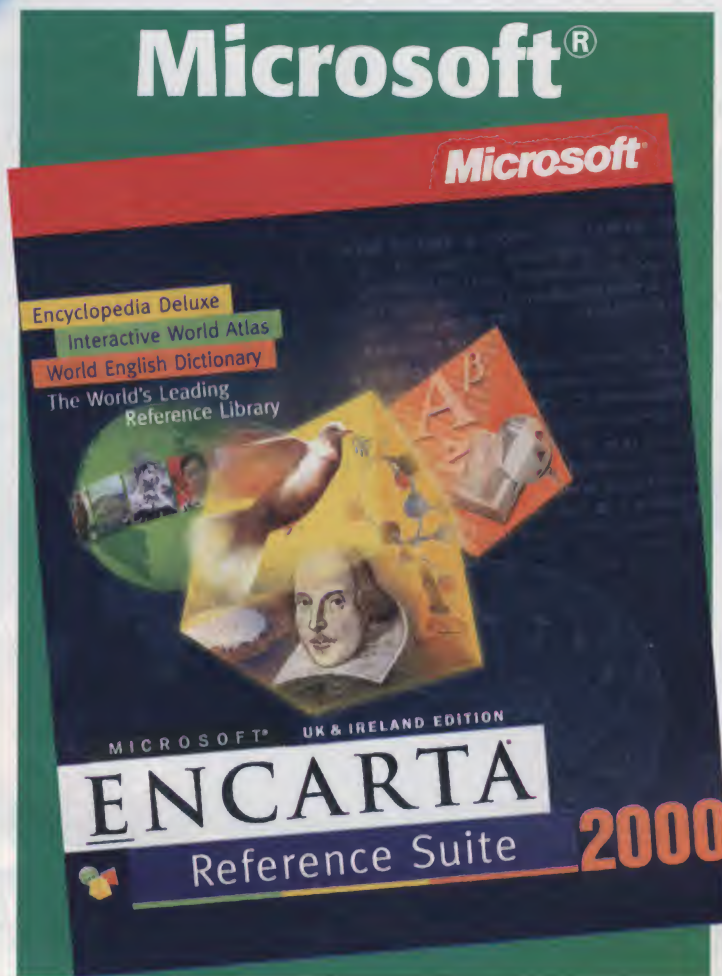


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PC WORLD

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THE STATE OF THE ART

The industry's long-standing obsession with all things 3D is increasingly evident in almost every new title we receive in the office these days. First-person shooters have been portrayed in full 3D for some considerable time now, but other genres are slowly making the transition into 3D too, albeit with some rather hefty teething problems.

It occurs to us that while first-person shooters are perfectly suited to a full 3D environment, nobody has stopped to consider whether other genres should automatically follow suit.

Developers of real-time strategy games have consistently had problems getting to grips with producing their games in 3D. In fact, many recent RTS titles have come complete with 3D graphic engines, seemingly for no reason other than to give the game's publisher

an excuse to plaster the legend 'full 3D' on the packaging and present gamers with options to view the action from a variety of camera angles. In our experience, the aforementioned multiple 3D views are used for novelty value for the first 30 minutes of play, then discarded for a more conventional top-down isometric view to make gameplay easier. We're not saying that there is anything wrong with giving players impressive panoramic views of the action as it unfolds, but it seems a high price to pay for the massive loss in graphical detail of buildings, units and game environments that is inevitable in most games produced in 3D (compare the beautiful graphics of *TA: Kingdoms* to the comparatively lacklustre visuals of *Warzone 2100* for an example).

However, just as it was inevitable that developers would churn out real-time

strategy games in 3D because they thought that was what the public wanted, it was also inevitable that someone would eventually get it right and give the gamer the best of both worlds. Welcome then, to *Homeworld*. Here we have a game that uses 3D technology which genuinely enhances the gameplay experience. The multiple camera angles used in this title are not just there so you can impress your PlayStation-owning friends, they are absolutely essential to the gameplay. We can but hope that developers of future RTS titles will use this game as a role model for their own efforts. For now, *Homeworld* is the 3D strategy game to beat. We await the next batch of RTS titles with interest.

Enjoy the issue, see you again next month.

Chris Anderson, Editor

MEET THE ZONE TEAM

All PC ZONE's reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a reviewer who's a fan of the genre



CHRIS ANDERSON

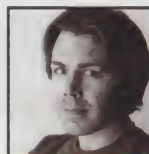
What was the best game you saw at ECTS?

Vampire. A truly original title, this game deserves to be huge when it's released next year.



PAUL MALLINSON

I still like the look of *X-COM Alliance*, but it's going to have to have a brilliant storyline to beat the likes of *System Shock 2*.



RICHE SHOEMAKER

The best new game was *C&C: Renegade*. Best game overall was *Team Fortress 2*.



MARK HILL

Vampire still looks like the hottest thing ever, while *The Sims* is a very welcome breath of fresh air.



STEVE HILL

Avoiding PR people.



CHARLIE BROOKER

Probably *Vampire* – its off-world setting makes *GTA2* about 75 per cent less interesting. Oh, and *The Sims* looks pretty good.

Homeworld marries RTS with 3D. Where does the genre go from here?

Expect hordes of RTS games strangely similar in approach and design to *Homeworld*.

More polygons. More units. More acronyms.

In the long run all genres will blend into one and we'll all be battling it out online.

They'll disappear when people realise just how dull they are and start playing turn-based games instead. Maybe.

I've got no idea – I'm not bloody Nostradamus.

Up its own arse, like everything else in this pisshole world of ours. Despair, despair. I wish I was dead.



PAUL PRESLEY

What was the best game you saw at ECTS?

Finding any alcohol before midday.



KEITH PULLIN

Grand Prix 3 was the highlight for me. Geoff Crammond is God and deserves a knighthood.



ADAM PHILLIPS

The Sims looked like an intriguing and original novelty item. How it will end up playing though is anyone's guess.



DAVID MCCANDLESS

It would probably have been *Duke Nukem Forever* if they had shown it. But they didn't, so it wasn't.



WARREN CHRISTMAS

Grand Prix 3 does look fab.



PHIL WAND

Grand Prix 3.

Homeworld marries RTS with 3D. Where does the genre go from here?

Games shouldn't be categorised, they should just be enjoyed without fear of negative stigma.

I played *Homeworld* for ages and it seems more like a shotgun marriage in Las Vegas to me. There's room for improvement yet.

Er... an RTS that incorporates both planet and space battles in full 3D. A whole galaxy with trading. RTS-style combat, a storyline...

The only way forward is to turn them into first-person deathmatches, obviously.

There's always room for improvement in RTS games when it comes to the AI.

More team features and better Internet connectivity. Add motorcycles and a *Way Out West* soundtrack and I'd be in heaven.

PCZONE

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WIN! Which celebrity plays one of the characters in *The Nomad Soul*? Send entries on the back of a postcard to: I've read the small print, PC ZONE (B2), 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7JH by Friday 7 October. Winner and prize announced same place next issue. Chris Dale from Dorset wins the ZONE grab bag of goodies from last month's compo for correctly answering that Richard Garriott designed the *Ultima* series. Well done, Alan.

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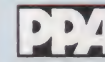
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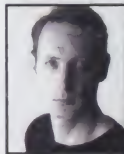


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MAILBOX



Are games too easy? Should girls appear on the cover of PC ZONE? Also, the office reels in shock as a reader claims to agree with Charlie Brooker

★ ANSWERED BY Chris Anderson

CONTACT INFO

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CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at www.pczone.co.uk for further info.

HE DOESN'T LIKE WOMEN

I realise you seemed quite excited about this new *Voyager* game and that Jeri Ryan is very attractive, but PC ZONE is a proper games magazine, not PC Floormat – putting pictures of women on the cover isn't the way you make money. You can easily sell copies due to the fact that you give the best reviews and you get the games first.

I was impressed a few months ago when the cover

didn't have the usual 'wipe clean' surface. I thought that at last you were trying to promote yourselves as a quality magazine and not just something for sad gamers to have a glance at in between masturbating over Lara Croft.

So can you please do yourselves a favour by not putting pictures of nice women on the covers because surely we can all get porn off the Net – seeing as you presume we're all connected.

Lazy Git

★ At the risk of explaining the obvious, *Voyager* is a *Star Trek* game and Jeri Ryan is an easily recognisable character from the series, so we put her on the cover. Most of our readers have no problem with this (they like pretty women), and it's not as though we feature girls on the cover very often anyway, so hey, don't worry about it. Nice name, by the way.



TOPTASTIC

I couldn't agree more with Charlie Brooker's comment in the last issue (PCZ #81). *BITS* is a prime example of media coverage of games. It is the most patronising, tacky and irritating program on TV, and those three girls – they could be at least good-looking. They're three stupid bimbos who read off an autocue and, like most girls, they don't have a clue about games.

I, like many other proper gamers, would like a programme which goes through games in depth with an unbiased rating, machine specs and some multiplayer action (much like PC ZONE), but instead we get presenters going: "This game is toptastic for you trigger happy keyboard kings out there!"

I know games shows won't be like this in years to come, but in the meantime we have to suffer the media's laughable attempts at making games-playing cool when they previously denounced it as being childish and a hobby for 'geeks'.

Chris Steele-Davies, Bridgwater

★ TV programmes on video games are aimed mostly at console gamers, due to the popularity of the PlayStation and N64. No surprise, then, that they assume their audience is very young, hence the 'dudetalk' babbled by their presenters. Avoid them, basically. You know it makes sense.

STORYBORED

As a veteran gamer from 1983 until now, I have seen many trends strike the games industry. Trends such as multiplay, official

LETTER OF THE MONTH



IN DEFENCE...

I thought I might revisit your discussion on realism in games. I take your point that earthbound games have an obvious appeal – but some of the best games ever made are set in fantasy environments and would not be the same if the settings were more mundane. For example, *Final Fantasy VII*, *Starsiege*, *Half-Life*, *X-COM* and *Ultima Online* are classic sci-fi/fantasy games.

Some realistic games suffer from being too authentic – in your review of *Force 21* you complain that the firing of the tanks is sporadic and inconsistent. Oh dear! In real life, tanks are designed so that in certain situations they can fire short bursts of intensely rapid fire, followed by long pauses. This is a feature designed to provide maximum firepower over a small time-frame. Of course, they can also provide sustained fire as well, which is how most people imagine tanks to operate. The point is, you were criticising an accurate real-life situation and implying that it caused problems with gameplay – so much for 'real-life' making for better games!

But it's true that some games are so obscure and inane (*Outcast* being one of them) that I feel the story developers need a good kick up the arse. But this does not mean fantasy/sci-fi is bad – it just means poorly written fantasy/sci-fi environments stick out like a sore thumb. If a game has a convincing



environment (even if it is set in a fantasy backdrop), people will relate to it.

As long as a game is convincingly portrayed, it will appeal. I actually prefer sci-fi environments because they give artists a chance to show what they can do. Anyone who has ever read *2000 AD* will know what I am talking about.

Daniel Polwarth

★ Mallo's comments in this month's Supertest (page 98) back up your point to an extent. He cites *System Shock 2* as having realistic futuristic environments, which may sound like a contradiction in terms, but it proves the point that good game design and

convincing locations can go a long way to immersing you in a game without the need for real-world environments. But Charlie and Steve would no doubt argue that *System Shock* would have been better still had the locations been more realistic. It's an intriguing argument and provokes thought as to what exactly is the 'X' factor that makes classic titles so believable and immersive.

Charlie and Steve are planning another feature, which they hope will prove or disprove this theory once and for all. Watch this space.



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CREATIVE

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Baldur's Gate: one of the few games that offer decent longevity of gameplay, says John Gray.

← endorsements and pseudo-VR have come and gone (*Multiplay and endorsements have gone? Where? – Ed*). But the one (sad) trend that seems to be here forever is that of the scripted storyline.

How many of us have played a game with a set story through to the end, only to find that when we start the game again it presents no challenge, no surprises and is, in a word, boring? So what do we do? We trundle off to the local software pusher for another fix.

Taking into consideration the amounts of capital invested by the software

visuals, speeds and levels of realism, but it seems we're all just slaves to the (short) storyteller.

John Gray, Aylesbury

★ Games that aren't scripted or structured very often come across as feeling aimless and leave the gamer in confusion as to what to do next. Your suggestion would only work in an online environment, with other 'real' players providing the excitement and in many ways creating their own storylines. This could happen with games like *Freelancer*, providing a

and, by all accounts, I am a reasonably intelligent individual. But I lost count of how many times I have shelled out up to £30 for a game that has proved to be impossibly difficult. That is, it may have up to 15 or so levels and I find it impossible to even complete the first or second. I always feel completely ripped off, and wonder how on earth game developers can possibly produce a game that the average individual could not complete. Of course, a refund of the unplayed levels is impossible.

I'm less and less interested in buying games now. I don't think I'm a "brainless moron", but until game developers make their games easier for the average individual, or put in more options to make their games easier, they get less and less of my money.

Ray Banks

"I lost count of how many times I have shelled out up to £30 for a game that has proved to be impossibly difficult"

RAY BANKS

houses into their projects, it seems as though software developers, like car manufacturers, are engineering a built-in lifespan into their games like never before. It's only business sense, after all.

Imagine, if you will, a *Privateer*-style space trading game. Give it a random planet, galaxy, ship and mission generator and it would be good for three months' playtime. If that same game had mission-based gameplay it would be over in about 20 hours.

There have been steps in the right direction, like *Baldur's Gate* but, sports simulations aside, EVERY game has a script – even *BG*. Recent advances in hardware capabilities promise amazing

virtual universe which would give potential for endless variety of gameplay, and *Neverwinter Nights* (from the people who made *Baldur's Gate*) giving you a real world to play about in to your heart's content online, much in the way *EverQuest* and *Ultima Online* do now. More news on these titles as we get it.

EASY DOES IT?

I feel compelled to respond to Andrew Williams' letter in your October issue, where he gives the view that today's games are not challenging enough, and asks if games developers think "we are all brainless morons".

Well, without blowing my own trumpet, I have a university level education

I don't have a DVD player, but I would be happy to buy one if someone would bring out some good software on DVD. It would cut down on piracy, too.

Tim Brown

★ So, both sides of the 'games are too easy' argument, then. We tend to agree with Tim. Games are much easier now, with the inclusion of savegames in almost every title we see (PC games *never* had a savegame feature a few years ago). Publishers seem to be making their titles easier to play and thus more accessible to casual gamers in an attempt to expand their target audience. Our advice to Ray is to play more games. They get easier the more you play them – you soon learn the do's and don'ts of each genre. Or just look in our incredibly useful troubleshooter section for tips on the games you're having trouble with.

WITS' END

I'm writing this letter because I'm desperate and at my wits' end. I can't play any decent PC games on my lowly PC as it's only a P133 with 16Mb RAM. I don't have a joystick or a decent 3Dfx card. The problem is that my parents don't see the point in getting an upgrade, because I seem to be cursed with a 19th century family who still write letters (oh how I long to send emails, but I'm not connected).

I've tried to buy RAM but I don't have a clue about the difference between EDO simms and DIMM simms. Fortunately, I find your minimum specs most helpful, so at least I can buy budget

games while drooling over the latest releases.

As I write this, I'm crying over the fact that the standard spec these days is a P166 with 32Mb RAM. Why can't companies make games that will run on low-spec machines? *Jedi Knight* ran fine on my machine and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I got *Half-Life* for Christmas, which ran slowly and took up 400Mb! I only have a 1.3Gb hard drive, so I was forced to delete it and have a rather unmerry Christmas.

Please tell me how I can get my stingy parents to fork out for an upgrade, or I will become bitter and twisted.

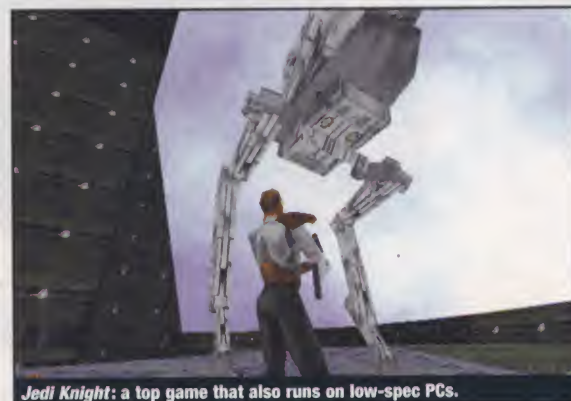
Mr Crap PC, Ilford

★ Buying more RAM for your PC will help a great deal. Your machine will support standard 72-pin



Ⓜ A DVD drive looking for friends, yesterday.

simms, but may support the EDO variety too, which is faster (check your motherboard manual for verification of this). You will also see a great improvement in the performance of first-person shooters with a decent 3D card (you should be able to pick one up for £50 or less). And *Unreal* will work fine on your machine with a little more RAM and a good 3D card. Beyond that your best bet is to keep scouring our budget section for re-released classics that suit your machine specs. ☑



Jedi Knight: a top game that also runs on low-spec PCs.

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For some reason, guards don't take kindly to thieves. Filthy scum, they are.

The mansion's urinal has burst a pipe. A whole new meaning to yellow showers.

DOUBLELOCK YOUR DOORS AND BAR YOUR WINDOWS, IT'S...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Looking Glass Studios
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring 2000

IN SUMMARY

Casting you in the role of Garrett, the soft-footed, arrow-throwing, pick-pocketing hero of *Thief: The Dark Project*, *The Metal Age* mixes fantasy with realistic AI and frantic action with stealthy adventure.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

It's the sequel to one of the most innovative, atmospheric and involving 3D action games in the last few years. It will undoubtedly take everything that made the original so great and improve it, keeping you on the edge of your seat all the way through. The developers have listened to all the feedback and will be concentrating on stealthy missions rather than monster bashing, the AI will be improved and sound will play a more important part than ever. What more could you possibly want?

THIEF 2: THE METAL AGE

The PC's favourite burglar returns for more heart-stopping adventures

★ **BEEN CAUGHT STEALIN'** Mark Hill



There's nothing like a well-aimed arrow in the head.



Garrett is going through that stage of listening to nothing but Metallica. He's at that age, you know.



One minute he's whistling merrily, the next he's got an arrow in his head. How on earth did that happen?



Stop lying there like a sack of spuds.



Guards just never watch their backs, do they? Didn't they play *Thief 1*? Gits.



It's a dull job, staring into walls all day, but someone has to do it.



A well-protected library is a sign of a cultured house.

When *Thief: The Dark Project* (PCZ #72, 90%) first broke into our office, it knocked many of us unconscious with its stealthy blackjack and groundbreaking use of sound. The tense atmosphere created by having to walk in shadows, afraid every creak of the floorboards is going to alert a guard to your presence, was enough to have even the most seasoned gamers gripping their mouse. Although we had some reservations about later levels, where stealth was discarded in favour of indiscriminate zombie-killing, the lasting impression is of an underrated landmark in PC gaming (as its proclamation of Fantasy Action Super-test winner in issue PCZ #79 testifies).

Now that the sequel is upon us, the developers have the chance to correct all the minor niggles and make *Thief 2* a name to be mentioned in the same breath as *Half-Life* and *System*

Shock 2. Once again it will utilise the original's Dark engine, pushing its capabilities even further than *System Shock 2* recently did.

While some criticised *The Dark Project* for having slightly below-average graphics for a first-person 3D game, the developers still believe this engine has by far the best AI system available, and that no other can simulate sight and hearing well enough. From what we've

seen of *The Metal Age*, we're not about to argue. The action takes place a few years after the events in the first one, and once again you play the role of Garrett. This time round the plot will involve the struggle to control powerful technologies left behind by a lost civilisation, with a sect known

as the Mechanists intent on using them to take control of the city. As the game progresses, you learn more about the different factions and about life in the city itself. There will be a much stronger focus on interesting environments, as opposed to the abundance of caves and abandoned areas found in the first game. There are 16 levels planned, which take place in more urban settings including mansions, banks

the ordinary action sequences in *The Dark Project* (and which arguably detracted from the whole experience) will give way to fully stealth-driven gameplay. To this end, the new tools being introduced have less to do with weaponry than with reconnaissance and camouflage. There are also plans to include a cooperative multiplayer element, so you can indulge in some coordinated robbery with your friends. We can hardly wait. **PCZ**

“In an effort to balance the gameplay and address the issues of ‘boring’ zombie levels, Looking Glass are paying more attention to the non-human characters’ AI”

seen of *The Metal Age*, we're not about to argue.

The action takes place a few years after the events in the first one, and once again you play the role of Garrett. This time round the plot will involve the struggle to control powerful technologies left behind by a lost civilisation, with a sect known

and detailed streets.

In an effort to balance the gameplay and address the issues of the ‘boring’ zombie levels, Looking Glass are paying more attention to the non-human characters’ AI, so that they will react to sound as realistically as your human opponents. This should mean that



Creeping up from behind may not be manly, but it's certainly effective.

TOP STORY



The new and improved *Colin McRae* looks set to be another best-seller.

MORE MUD UNDER YOUR ARCHES

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Codemasters

PUBLISHER Codemasters

WEBSITE www.codemasters.com

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Early 2000

IN SUMMARY

Return to rallying with a beefier, brawnier graphics power train together with photo-realistic vehicles and backdrops, plus new gameplay mechanics that Codemasters are keeping mum about.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

A number one chart hit in 26 countries, the original *Colin McRae Rally* set the standard for PC rally games. The sequel looks set to do exactly the same.

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2

Grade 'A' Scottish lunatic Colin McRae flies past the scenery in a four-door hatch. Coming for a ride?

★ LEFT FOOT BRAKER Phil Wand



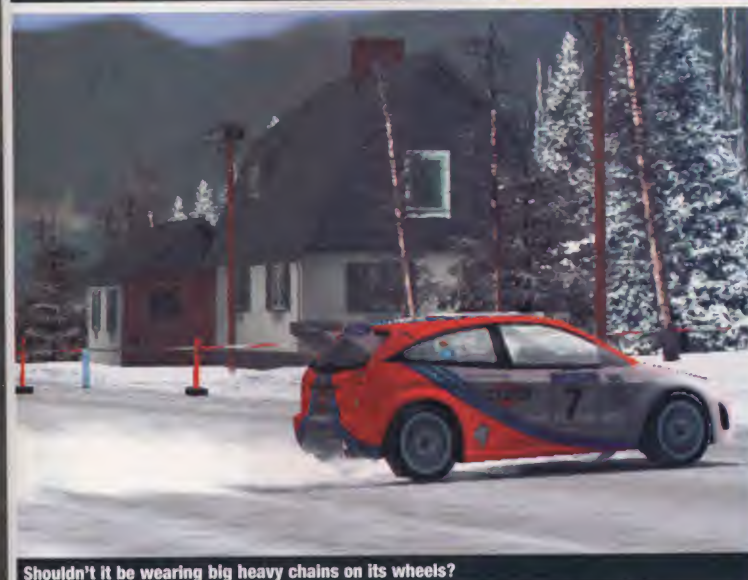
It's clean now, but you haven't been through the mud yet.



CMR2 promises to be much faster. Are you ready for it?



New reflection techniques and a lot more polygons will make this one even more stunning.



Shouldn't it be wearing big heavy chains on its wheels?



And we have take off...



All the scenery has been created from photographs of real-life locations.



Add some easy listening music and you've got yourself yet another car advert.

There isn't a car driver on the planet who hasn't driven across snow, wet grass, down a dusty track or up their mate's gravel driveway and wondered what it'd be like to leap on the throttle, saw at the wheel and give the car a damn good lashing. And it's this innate rallying instinct that games developers have been exploiting for several years, with countless different titles for every format from home consoles to cabinets in seafront arcades.

After the huge success of *Colin McRae Rally* (PCZ #68, 93%) on the PC and PlayStation, Codemasters have upped the budget for the sequel and promise to retain all the elements that made the first game a best-seller. With over 1.5 million units shipped in Europe and Japan, plus a number one chart slot in 26 countries, the McRae name has been one of the most lucrative motorsport franchises yet and they're keen to preserve its status.

The 30-strong team of developers at Codemasters HQ have breathed on the original game's graphics engine, and the preliminary screenshots you see here are testimony to that fact. Visually, the new game is rather arresting. There are now considerably more polygons hopping round the screen at any given moment, allowing the cars and countryside to be rendered with as few jagged lines as possible, as well as a new reflection mapping technique that gives objects a glossy sheen. Although mirror-like bodywork is somewhat incongruous in a rally game, the cars should become dirtier and dirtier as the stages progress.

There's also the promise of a quantum leap in frame rate and perceived velocity – partly due to a rewrite of the graphics code, partly due to the omnipresence of fast processors and 3D accelerator cards – to give an altogether more exciting ride. Considering that inappropriate speed forms the backbone of the

entire motorsport, this can only be a good thing. Anyone who's ever watched a backseat view as Messrs McRae, Mäkinen and Sainz hurtle through one of the cliff-edge stages will know just how exhilarating rallying can be.

“The scenery has been assembled from photographic masters taken on location all around the globe”

As well as looking a lot faster and more realistic, the backdrops and scenery have been assembled from photographic masters taken all around the globe. So, when you're sliding through the drizzling rain of Kielder Forest in Cumbria or scooting along the parched roads of Cordoba, what you see is actually there. That said, Codemasters are keen to point out that, although we're all distracted

by buffed and glossy paintwork, they've been doing most of the work under the bonnet: tweaking this, tuning that, and bashing all the other stuff with a wrench. There's a wealth of new features and content, together with a revised race structure. In terms of gameplay, new dynamics and driving styles are currently on the factory floor – but Codemasters aren't giving away any details, the rotters.

What is definite is that the upcoming title will spotlight the Ford team, now that Colin has left Subaru. Gone is the barking mad Impreza and in comes the Focus hatchback that your mum uses for her weekly run to Sainsbury's. Although not quite as extravagant as the Japanese rocket, it's actually every bit as rapid – and so every bit as competitive.

If *TOCA 2* (PCZ #76, 93%) is anything to go by, Codemasters are fully capable of producing strong sequels. This can only mean that *Colin McRae 2* looks like setting the PC rally game standard all over again. **PCZ**

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ECTS '99: THE BEST YET?

NEWS EDITOR Richie Shoemaker



Four months on from the US show, E3, where every publisher was trying to outdo the others with flashing lights, booming PAs and scantily-clad vixens, this year's European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) at Olympia seemed more like a church fête.

Activision, EA, and GT Interactive were noticeable by their absence and even Eidos kept a low profile. Nope, it wasn't the greatest show on Earth, but it was still damn good.

FIFA 2000, *Duke Nukem Forever*, *Diablo II*, *Star Trek: Voyager - Elite Force*, *Quake III Arena* - all these games were kept away. Instead, on show were a clutch of new titles, many from unknown European developers. It was quite refreshing to see the likes of Project 2, Midas Interactive, Anco and THQ take centre-stage. Hasbro, for once, could boast the most lavish stand, while such high profile developers as Westwood, Valve and Blizzard were tucked away. The good thing was that we had time to gawp at *C&C: Renegade*, *Grand Prix 3* and *Warcraft III*, without being jostled like spuds in a roasting tray.

Although Geoff Crammond's *Grand Prix 3* was the 'official' star of the show, that trophy has to go to *C&C: Renegade*, with *Warcraft III* in second place. Eidos, too, had a couple of beauties in the form of *Project IGI* and *Hitman*, and it was a pleasure to see *Team Fortress 2* again. Anco's *Player Manager Online* raised a few eyebrows, with the potential to be the biggest UK online game yet seen. It will be free, with players paying per season depending on what team they choose to manage, with thousands of pounds up for grabs for the best manager.

Because we couldn't get hold of screenshots for *Grand Prix 3* or *Icewind Dale* (BioWare's *Baldur's Gate* semi-sequel), we shall leave those for next issue, when we'll have a full in-depth report on both, plus a few others. Why not pop along to www.pczone.co.uk, where our overworked online editor has a few more ECTS treats in store.

THE PCZONE CHARTS

What's in, out,
up and down

P.28

ChartTrack

TECH-HEAD

nVidia and 3Dfx announce their
next-generation 3D hardware

P.33



WARCRAFT III

It was hardly the most surprising announcement of the show, but Sierra's 'top secret' *Warcraft III* was finally unveiled at ECTS and turned a few heads in the process.

Rather than stick to the tried and tested real-time strategy genre, developers Blizzard decided to pen their own - the RPS, or role-playing strategy game. Whether Blizzard's new addition to the gaming lexicon catches on, we shall see, but the game is sure to take off in a big way.

Borrowing a look reminiscent of Bullfrog's post-Molyneux graphical direction, Blizzard have decided to follow the growing trend for full-3D strategy games. But the movement of the various units (skeletal animation for each), and the impressive variety of the terrain easily dwarfs others' attempts, and the wealth of story-driven, in-game cut-scenes brings a cohesive story rich with scripted events.

Each unit, especially the hero in charge of them, has been given an injection of personality by way of 3D animated portraits that occupy the corner of the screen.

Battles will be a lot smaller in scale than in previous *Warcraft* games, with resource management kept to a minimum and base building left almost automatic. Instead *Warcraft III* features heroes that gain in experience, a dynamic interface that provides many attacking options and a number of NPCs with which to interact and mindlessly slaughter. Experience points will be doled out to the heroes throughout the game, and gold will be the currency needed to expand the ranks.

Six races will feature (humans, orcs, demons, dwarfs - and two yet to be decided), each distinct in overall ability, with around 15 different units available to each. Magic will play a major part, with a range of spells that will be devastating in effect and appearance. Graphically, it's very well polished already - but, unfortunately, we have at least a year to wait until *Warcraft III* appears.



① A vertically challenged person. Yesterday.



The in-game cut-scenes are integrated seamlessly, some occurring even during the action.



Blizzard are rightfully proud of their interface.

UK PC GAMES CHAMPIONSHIPS

News from the qualifying rounds leading up to the Grand Final

P.34

MAN WHO KNOWS

The very latest industry gossip

P.38



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO....?

Three games that should've been here by now

P.39



HOTSHOTS

A sneak preview of up-and-coming game releases

P.40



COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE

C&C's commando returns in 3D

Last month we revealed details of Westwood's C&C 3D action spin-off *C&C: Commando*, and we have to admit we were a little off the mark – not least about the name.

C&C: Renegade – as it is now known – was shown in the UK for the first time at ECTS, behind closed doors by none other than Westwood co-founder Louis Castle. So eager was PC ZONE to talk to the man that no less than ten of us were there, just in case the others failed to turn up. Apart from the game itself, which looks pretty awesome, we were stunned that after two years in development, release is set for early next year.

"C&C: *Renegade* is a new line of products we are working on within the *Command & Conquer* universe," Louis told us. "Inspired by the *Commando* missions in the original game, we thought it would be great to

"With *Renegade* out early next year, a *Tiberian Sun* mission pack on the way and a 3D *Command & Conquer* on the cards, the future looks very bright indeed for C&C fans"

have a bunch of those missions and do it in third-person."

Rather than an all-out action game, *Renegade* is as much about tactics as anything else. As the demonstration kicked off, we saw our GDI hero, Jack Shepherd, abseil from the back of a chopper and fell two guards soon after touching down. Using a sniper rifle, he was able to target different parts of the body, demonstrated perfectly by Louis clipping a guard's leg, prompting a previously hidden soldier to come to the wounded man's aid. Another easy target.

Although all the missions are set against the NOD forces, each is set up by 3D engine cut-scenes, and what an engine it is. Every vehicle and building from the first C&C game (which *Renegade* is set just after) is in the game, each of which can be entered and – in the case of vehicles – driven.

Most impressive of all is the lengths to which Westwood have gone to make the game as familiar as possible to C&C fans. Seeing the buildings – construction yards, barracks and the Hand Of NOD especially – at such a scale is a wondrous thing to behold. These aren't just pretty backdrops, either. Going into these structures shows Westwood haven't



Yes, you can sneak inside buildings and take control of all the vehicles, all with proper physics.



The Hand Of Nod is one of the game's largest structures and has six subterranean levels.



Inside that church you'll see *Renegade*'s most impressive lighting effects. If you can make it inside alive.



There are currently plans for 16 weapons.

just been sitting around, waiting for *Tiberian Sun* to fill the coffers. The AI, too, will allow friendly units to follow their own objectives.

"We had to build our own engine because all the levels are predominantly outdoors," explained Louis. "Even where you have indoor missions, like taking out a power plant, it generally has an effect on the outdoor area – where GDI forces might be attacking the base. It was important for the engine to be able to handle the size of the outdoor areas we needed."

All this made us wonder if we'd ever see a

Command & Conquer game in 3D. "Yeah, we'll eventually do that," said Louis, "but not until we can get hundreds of units running around the screen all at once, and running well even on low-end hardware."

So with *Renegade* out early next year, a *Tiberian Sun* mission pack on the way and a 3D C&C on the cards, the future looks very bright indeed for C&C fans.

Check www.pczone.co.uk for exclusive movie footage of *C&C: Renegade* in action.

SHORTS

FOX SIGN MONOLITH

With their new 3D engine LithTech 2.0 in place, developers Monolith have joined forces with Fox Interactive. Fox will publish Monolith's two action titles, *Sanity* and *No One Lives Forever*, while Monolith will begin work on a 3D game based on one of Fox's hot properties – among them *Aliens*, *X-Files*, *Predator* and, er, *Ally McBeal*. It is more likely, however, that Monolith will start on an *X-Men* game to tie in with the film currently in production.



FAKE PLASTIC KNEES

The little green *Army Men* are making a Christmas return in 3DO's *Army Men III: Toys In Space*. It's not surprising, then, that some of the new missions will be based on unearthly planets, where you'll have monochrome aliens and space troopers to direct and destroy. However, like the previous two games, the isometric viewpoint and garish graphics remain. Can't wait.



SPLINTER GROUP

Imagine *Descent* in miniature and you'd be some way to describing the action in first-person shooter *Splinter*. Piloting a MERC (Micro Experiment Reconnaissance Craft), the aim is to find a similar vehicle that has gone missing. Unfortunately, giant bugs stand in the way. EA will be releasing the game *Down Under*, although no UK-specific details are yet available.



ENTER PLANET DUST

Three developers are going off-road

There's something oddly unfulfilling about straight racing games where your main objective is to stick to a track and follow it round. Once you've memorised where the next corner is going to be and which bends are especially dangerous, driving becomes almost automatic. Skid slightly off the track and you lose speed and momentum, try to cut corners and you're likely to get stuck in gravel or tyres. So where's the fun in that?

By contrast, off-road racers offer you freedom from all these restrictions, allowing you to go any way you want and, most importantly, have a good time.

While four-wheeled vehicles have enjoyed success in this area with the *Monster Truck Madness* series, the best off-road game is probably still

Motocross Madness. But that could all change as news reaches us of three new dirt-bound games: *Off The Road* from Codemasters, *Test Drive Off-Road 3* from Accolade, and (surprise, surprise) *Off Road* from Rage. Well, what do you want them to be called, for crying out loud?

Codemasters' provisionally titled *Off The Road* features all the usual jeeps and trucks and a selection of military vehicles, which

you'll be able to race over vast locations. There'll be some interesting game modes, including Jamboree, where you have to dash at high speed through a series of flagged gates placed randomly over the course, as well as capture the flag and a football mode, where cars replace footballers.

Rage's article-less *Off Road*, on the other hand, puts the emphasis firmly on realistic car handling, although you'll have the chance to play a more arcadey option, as well as competing in time trials and full seasons. The graphics look set to be spot-on, too, with dust clouds, exhaust fumes and engine flames all

enhancing the authentic look and feel of the game.

Finally, Accolade's *Test Drive: Off-Road 3* (whose release is still to be confirmed in this country) gives you the chance to customise and

upgrade your vehicles to make them more suitable for each environment. There are some impressive details, such as the way accumulated mud can wash off when you're splashing through water. You can make your own tracks as you go along, smashing down trees and fences in 11 different locations, including Tibet, Louisiana and the Canadian Rockies. Let's hope this sequel is better than the last game. A lot better.

“There'll be interesting game modes, including Jamboree, where you dash through randomly placed flagged gates, plus capture the flag and a football mode, where cars replace footballers”

THE RACE IS ON. OR OFF. WHATEVER

Here's all the dirt on the three racers

OFF THE ROAD

Developer Invictus
Publisher Codemasters
Release date Winter 2000



Don't be surprised if you come across a herd of stampeding buffalo in *Off The Road*.

OFF ROAD

Developer Rage Software
Publisher GT Interactive
Release date Christmas '99



There's a wide selection of camera angles for you to choose from.

TEST DRIVE: OFF-ROAD 3

Developer Accolade
Publisher Infogrames
Release date TBC



Also appearing on the PlayStation and Gameboy – not a good sign.



Marine jeeps versus redneck trucks could prove an interesting challenge.



Lots of silding, jumping and skidding in Rage's *Off Road*.



This vehicle has been specially modified to fly. Apparently.



Why, hello, it's Mr Frog.



Obviously, they haven't put the shadows in yet.



'The biggest explosions ever!' it says here.



Control gunships, fighters, tanks and even alien craft.



This Dali-esque planet must be Fantasy World.

INCOMING SEQUEL

What game was responsible for selling more 3D cards than any other? God knows, but *Incoming* from Rage must be high up the list, especially as it both looked good and came free with most of them anyway. Whether the sequel will help shift as many next-generation 3D cards remains to be seen, but a quick playtest at ECTS hints that it could.

Incoming Forces uses Rage Software's shiny new 3D engine, which considerably raises the polygon count of its predecessor, adds realistic physics and throws it all on screen with the minimum of fuss. Rage have also added to the gameplay – expanding the mission-based strategy elements from the latter part of the original game as you

fight over 21 missions across four very different worlds. There will be ten vehicles to pilot and you'll be able to switch between them mid-mission and even command squads of infantry.

Incoming Forces will be released during the first quarter of next year through Infogrames.

WELL HIDDEN, MORE DANGEROUS

Czech developer Illusion Softworks will be continuing the *Hidden & Dangerous* series with a mission pack and a sequel. We don't know whether the mission pack will be based in Europe, north Africa or the steamy jungles of south east Asia, but we can tell you that it will be out in November. As for the sequel, there's no news of whether it will be based in WWII, but we hope so. Set for a surprisingly early April release, with a new 3D engine to boot, *Hidden & Dangerous 2* is sure to be one of the top games of 2000.

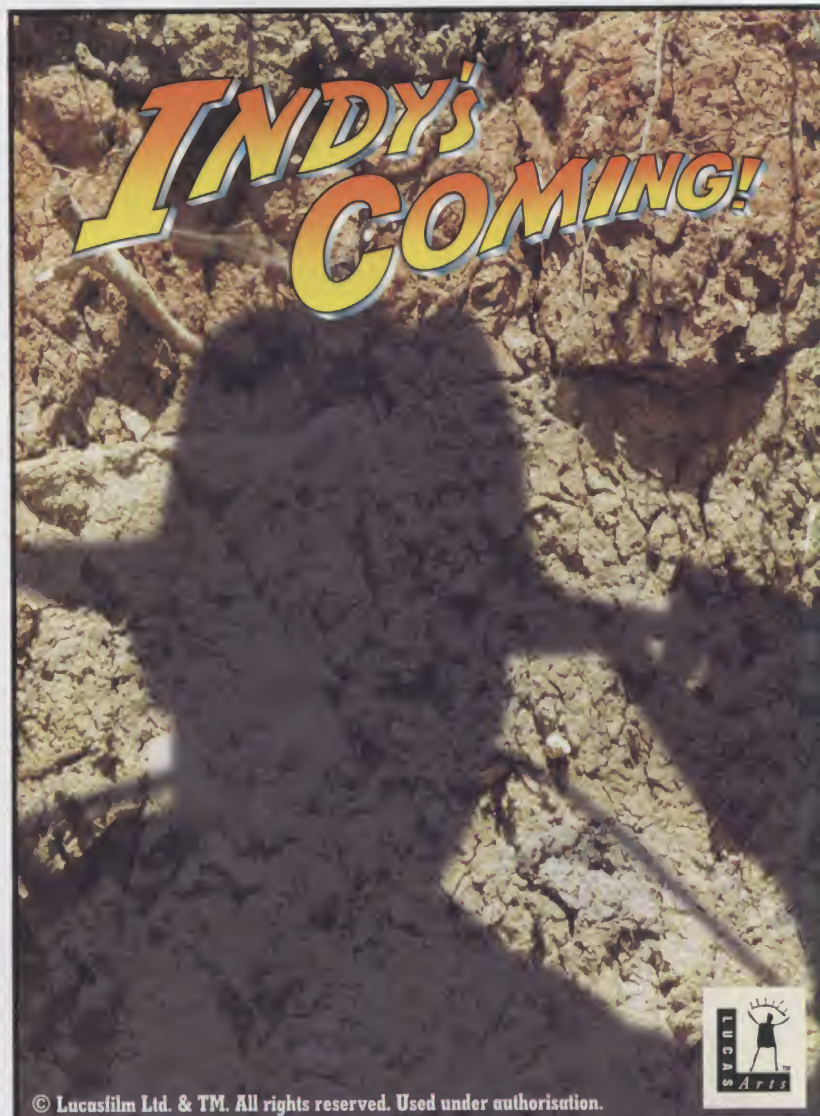
Also in development from Illusion Softworks (apart from *Flying Heroes* – see page 61) is *Gangster*, a 3D tactical action game based in 1920s America. Although details are sketchy, expect to be planning bank heists, avoiding cops and assassinating other gang members. No release has yet been set, but late next year seems likely.



We await the screenshots of the mission pack and sequel with bated breath.



Hidden & Dangerous: the sequel should be one of the gaming highlights of 2000.



ONLINE DIARY

Role-playing games – what they are and where to get 'em

★ WORDS Phil Wand

ONLINE FANTASY

Stop sniggering. Online RPGs are big, and getting bigger every second

Role-playing games are huge. *Huge*. Hundreds of thousands of players are creating online personae, choosing individual attributes and then immersing themselves in a virtual world where they can be whoever they want, go anywhere they like and do anything they choose. The basic idea of role playing is that you define your own role – how you play and how you progress are your decisions. Become a warrior mage and obliterate whole towns with giant fireballs – or become a knight and rescue maidens from the clutches of dragons. It's all up to you and your phone bill. But which one to choose?



It looks good. It plays good. We dig it.

ASHERON'S CALL (Microsoft)

What? Described as the ultimate in immersive fantasy, *Asheron's Call* is a persistent RPG built around an evolving 3D world.

More? Nominated for the title of Best Online Multiplayer Game at this year's E3, *Asheron's Call* has been gathering some serious support from an impressive number of beta-testers. Founded on the rules of 'classic' role playing, the game features dungeons, dragons and treasure – stories of which circulate over flagons of ale at the local tavern. There are multiple, unique heritage groups, customised facial features, skin tones, hairstyles – even hair and eye colour.

Why? Everything's designed to feel as though it's real. For example, special 'emote' commands enable you to react during conversation, for example 'smack head' at the punchline of a bad joke.

Where? www.asheroncall.com

When? Christmas 1999

SPELLBINDER: THE NEXUS CONFLICT (Mythic Entertainment)

What? First-person RPG using the *Prince Of Persia 3D* engine, based on Iron Crown's *Rolemaster* series.



It's a wizards' convention.

More? Featuring more action than your usual RPG, *Spellbinder* is a mix of first-person action and involving role-playing. Only three different characters will be on offer – Magician, Healer and Mystic – but with hundreds of spells flying around, this could be the wizard's bollocks. Think capture-the-flag-meets-*EverQuest*.

Why? Because online RPGs don't have enough action. The downside is that *Spellbinder* may lack the interaction that makes games like *UO* so successful.

Where? www.centropolis.com/games/spellbinder

When? Winter 1999

SIX OF THE REST

Some more – but not all – online RPGs on the way over the coming months



DARK AGES (Nexon)

Where www.darkages.com
When Winter 1999



ANARCHY ONLINE (Funcom)

Where www.anarchyonline.com
When Winter 1999



THE AWAKENING PROJECT (BT Enterprises)

Where www.dtcomputers.com/awaken/
When TBC



ILLUSIA: QUEST FOR THE ETERNALS (Living Mask)

Where www.illusia.com
When End 2000



MIDDLE-EARTH (Yosemite)

Where www.middle-earth.com
When Early 2000, beta soon



ATRIARCH (World Fusion)

Where www.atriarch.com
When TBC



Skeleton versus guard: no contest.



Family photo of a troll and his missus. How sweet.

EVERQUEST (Verant)

What? Although at a distinct disadvantage in that most people were playing *Ultima Online* at its launch, *EverQuest* has already captured the imagination of RPG fans the world over.

More? Create your character by choosing a silly name, a class and a race, allocating some starting points and then getting stuck in. *EverQuest* has been designed to be a little more 'linear' than *Ultima Online*, making it a lot easier to understand what's going on, and how to progress your skills and standing. Combat is also much more realistic, helped by superb 3D graphics and weaponry. Why? It looks simply stunning – support for Direct3D and Glide is a big bonus. Most people regard *EverQuest* as another life, rather than just a game. You'll find many players sitting around just gawping at the landscape.

Where? www.everquest.com

When? Out now. The expansion pack, *The Ruins Of Kanark*, featuring a new race, is out early next year.



Judging by her outfit, it really is never winter.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS (Bioware)

What? Back in 1990, AOL hosted a multiplayer fantasy game based on TSR's *Forgotten Realms*. Killed off five years later, *Neverwinter Nights* has only recently been rewritten and resurrected by developers Bioware (of *Baldur's Gate* fame). More? The new game is quite different from the original. Players are now able to join games on any one of a number of servers. They can also design their own modules using graphics, items, monsters and non-player characters from the main game. Modules can be linked to each other via special Portals, allowing players to move from one server to another without ever leaving the game. Why? There's a strong emphasis on party-based adventuring, a hangover from the AD&D game from which it is derived. The ability to take on the role of Dungeon Master is particularly nifty. Where? www.neverwinternights.com When? Late 2000



Yes, we know it looks shit. You can't judge a book...

ULTIMA ONLINE: THE SECOND AGE (Origin)

What? Top dog. Described by our venerable Ed as the most rewarding gaming experience of his life, *Ultima Online* is deep and involving. But consider your phone bill before joining up. More? A living, breathing, make-believe world - a virtual, fantasy society out on the Internet. Your character is defined wholly by the actions you make. Cast a lot of spells and your mage skills increase. Go fighting dragons and you'll have maidens swooning in admiration at your big combat skills. Other players are some of the friendliest around, and are willing to lend a hand to newbies. Why? There's just so much to it. So many players, player guilds, towns, locations, spells, skills... and it goes on. Forever. And you can stop frowning at the naff graphics. Where? www.owo.com When? Out now. There are rumours of a sequel (in 3D?) on the way - maybe as early as September 2000.

WHAT'S ON AT WIREPLAY

★ **QUAKE KING** *Quake II King of the Server* has had well over a thousand people logging on since its launch last month. You want your name in lights? Connect up, tool up and kick some arse.

★ **CLANSPLACE** Fancy some web server space for your Wireplay clan? The free hosting offer, previously limited to clubs and leagues, is now available to any clan of any game supported by the Wireplay system.

★ **LADDERS AND LEAGUES** Lots of wannabes signing up for the *Unreal* ladder, as well as for the *Kingpin* league and for *Quake III*. If you think you're good enough to get your name in lights, watch for relevant links on the Wireplay home page.

★ **NEW FORUMS** Two new forums have recently got underway, covering *F22 ADF* and the number one best seller *Alien vs Predator*.

★ **WIREPLANNER** Keep an eye on the Wireplay Wireplanner for all manner of games related-chat evenings, tournaments and championships. Everything is catered for, from *Colin McRae Rally* fans to people holding their breath waiting for *Duke Nukem 3D*.

All at www.wireplay.co.uk



Wireplay

The games network

Online Diary is sponsored by BT Wireplay

ROLE OVER TO...

UO VAULT

Hods of information dished out on an hourly basis. Discussion boards cover every aspect of *Ultima Online*, from combat and magic to design and development. Maps are available covering most important areas of the *UO* universe. www.uovault.com

STRATICS

Huge site dedicated to helping people get the most from *EverQuest*, *Ultima Online*, *Asheron's Call*, *Middle Earth*, *Sovereign* and *Atriach*. Forums, developer chat, patches, information, strategies, maps - everything. www.stratics.com

CROSSROADS NETWORK

Regularly updated site dealing with pretty much every aspect of online gaming, simulations, fantasy, with particular emphasis on the top RPGs.

Includes web hosting for various *Ultima Online* clans. www.xrgaming.net

VAULT

Another ring of sites dedicated to the RPG 'biggies'. Each node of the *Vault* network is stuffed to the gills with countless message boards, guidebooks, editorial, reviews, screenshots and links, to give a real community atmosphere. www.vaultnetwork.com

EQ REALMS

A nicely designed site dedicated to *EverQuest* and its countless characters. Lots of data on the different classes and skills, as well as useful snippets on weapons, items, armour and spells. Supports website hosting. www.eqrealms.com

OLTHOI'S LAIR

News and overviews of *Asheron's Call*. The site is regularly updated and

includes a FAQ, various maps, emote lists, weapons and armour, creatures, skills listing, newbie guide and message forums. asheron.gamestats.com

GAMER'S ALLIANCE RPG

Top site for first looks, previews and reviews of role-playing games. Exclusive interviews with developers should be of interest to the RPG geeks among you. Also includes polls and support for site hosting. www.ga-rpg.com

THE MIDE PROVINCE

Aimed squarely at the growing *Dark Ages* community, The Mide Province has all sorts of information for newbies and old hands alike. A full online manual is a real boon, as are player databases and must-have downloads. www.mideprovince.com



CHARTS

All you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload, plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what *you* think



C&C: Tiberian Sun: selling by the shedload.

CHART COMMENT

Tiberian Sun at number one! Not that I'm surprised, but after three years in development, I thought it would have been better – and so do many of you, it seems. I'm not saying it's bad – quite the opposite – but I can see a fair few hardcore real-timers being a little disappointed. Looking at how many copies were shifted on the first day (153,000 copies in the UK alone), it could well beat *Myst* as the best-selling PC game of all time. The only other new releases making an impact are *FA Premier League Stars* and *Civ II* remix *Test Of Time*. Next month, *Unreal Tournament* and *Homeworld* should do some damage – they certainly deserve to.

Richie Shoemaker

THE MEGASTORES TOP 10

SEP	OCT	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	REV SCORE
-	1	C&C: TIBERIAN SUN	WESTWOOD	EA	90%
1	2	KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME	XATRIX	INTERPLAY	92%
3	3	HIDDEN & DANGEROUS	ILLUSION SOFTWARES	TAKE 2	91%
7	4	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
2	5	ALIENS VS PREDATOR	REBELLION	FOX INTERACTIVE	91%
-	6	CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME	MICROPROSE	HASBRO	84%
-	7	F-22 LIGHTNING 3	NOVALOGIC	NOVALOGIC	70%
4	8	DUNGEON KEEPER 2	BULLFROG	EA	94%
6	9	OUTCAST	APPEAL	INFOGRAMES	62%
-	10	FA PREMIER LEAGUE STARS	EA SPORTS UK	EA SPORTS	73%

THE TOP 10

SEP	OCT	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
-	1	C&C: TIBERIAN SUN	WESTWOOD	EA	90%
5	2	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
2	3	SW: EP I – THE PHANTOM MENACE	BIG APE / LUCASARTS	ACTIVISION	78%
3	4	HIDDEN & DANGEROUS	ILLUSION SOFTWARES	TAKE 2	91%
-	5	FA PREMIER LEAGUE STARS	EA SPORTS UK	EA SPORTS	73%
1	6	KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME	XATRIX	INTERPLAY	92%
-	7	CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME	MICROPROSE	HASBRO	84%
4	8	ALIENS VS PREDATOR	REBELLION	FOX INTERACTIVE	91%
10	9	ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON	CHRIS SAWYER	HASBRO	87%
7	10	STAR WARS: EPISODE I – RAGER	LUCASARTS	ACTIVISION	74%

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 1999)

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"A lot of the chart seems to consist of games that are sequels or games of movies. *Tiberian Sun*, although a great game, isn't much better than the original and if it didn't have C&C splashed all over it, I doubt it would be in the top 10. I love the game, but if I had played the original a lot, I'd have been very pissed off to receive a 'pretty looking mission pack'."

Splug, World citizen

"God damn, I went into my nearest game dealers the other day to find it was being ransacked by a bunch of marauding invalids. There was only one possible explanation: *Tiberian Sun* had finally arrived."

Cultist, St Albans

"I'm in no doubt that *Tiberian Sun* is at number one because we're still waiting for games like *Quake III Arena*, *System Shock 2* and *Soldier Of Fortune* to come out. *Tiberian Sun* is simply bread for the ducks. It can crawl in the corner and die in its own hype, for all I care."

siNK, Leeds

"*Tiberian Sun* at number one already? Westwood must be living like hogs in the fat house. Let's see if it has the staying power of *CM3* and I just hope *Kingpin* doesn't vanish too quickly."

Stoo, Newark

"This month's chart is full of disappointments. *Tib Sun*, *Phantom Menace*, *FA Stars*, *Kingpin* and *Star Wars Racer* promised to quench the annual summer drought, but none have delivered. I'm left looking to Christmas for a bit of quality."

The Frew, Middlesbrough

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

PC ZONE and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer this simple question:

Question: According to Westwood, which of their early games 'defined the real-time strategy genre'?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with with all the information requested, to the address below

➤ Name / Address / Postcode / Daytime phone number / Email / Job title / Company name / Age if under 18

➤ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies

➤ Are you a current subscriber to PC ZONE?

Answers on a postcard to: PC ZONE Chart Compo (CPCZ911A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ Closing date: Friday 7 October

➤ Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Ed's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. Caplsche?

COMPETITION

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...

- 1 **Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines** (Eidos)
- 2 **X-Files: The Game** (Fox Interactive)
- 3 **World Cup '98** (EA Sports)
- 4 **Premier Manager '98** (Gremlin)
- 5 **Titanic: Adventure Out Of Time** (Europress)

2 YEARS AGO...

- 1 **Dungeon Keeper** (Bullfrog)
- 2 **Little Big Adventure 2** (EA)
- 3 **C&C: Red Alert** (Westwood/Virgin)
- 4 **Theme Hospital** (Bullfrog/EA)
- 5 **FIFA Soccer Manager** (EA)

5 YEARS AGO...

- 1 **Theme Park** (EA)
- 2 **Rebel Assault** (US Gold)
- 3 **Frontier: Elite II** (Gameltek)
- 4 **The Journeyman Project** (Gameltek)
- 5 **Sam & Max Hit The Road** (LucasArts/US Gold)

IT'S TIME

THIEF

HUNTER

Prince of Persia 3D

AVAILABLE: OCTOBER 1999 FULFIL YOUR DESTINY

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WIN
95/98



www.pop3d.com



The team includes three architects and an urban planner.



This doesn't look like the future to us.



Over a hundred square miles of urban area to tear up.

IN DRIVER'S SEAT

With *Driver* having just hit the streets (reviewed on page 78), and a sequel already in development, THQ have announced a futuristic tribute to *Reflection's* chase 'em up in the guise of *Felony Pursuit*.

Set in the 21st Century, the game will feature 38 missions and over 15 driveable vehicles. Siding either with the cops or the criminals – essentially doubling the mission count – the game will be set over a series

of interlinked islands, with realistic traffic flows and intelligent pedestrian movement. Developed by the relatively unknown Polygon Studios, *Felony Pursuit* should be out next March.

BONEY N

Empire's *Wargamer* series continues next month with *Napoleon 1813*, a strategy game that combines both the traditional turn-based game with real-time options. Choosing either the Allies or France, players can take part in the 1813-14 campaign that historically ended with Napoleon's surrender in Paris. Over 100 troop types will be included as well as a range of options that should appeal to the hardcore as well as the casual wargamer.



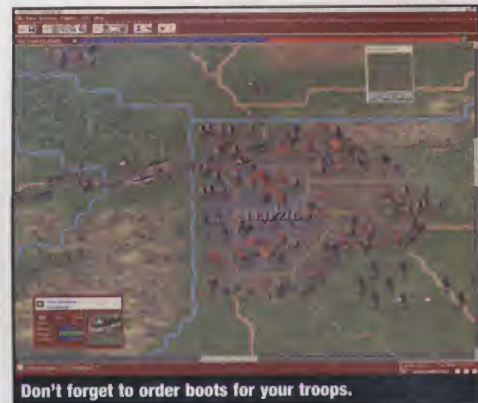
Train the little beggars early with Nerf.



Unreal colours, man.

GORE-FREE 3D SHOOTER

Some of you may have heard of Nerf guns – garish weapons that fire sucker-darts and ping-pong balls. How appropriate then that Hasbro will be releasing *Nerf ArenaBlast*, a mass-market 3D shooter along the lines of *Unreal Tournament* that uses the same engine. Aimed both at hardcore FPS fans and a younger audience, *ArenaBlast* won't feature any blood or gore, rather the aim will be to amass points with well-placed shots – using gaudy weapons that are about as dangerous as they are stylish. The game will be out next year.



Don't forget to order boots for your troops.

HAVE YOU SEEN
THESE GAMES!?

... Charged at £9.99 – £12.99 ...

Plus all the usual suspects: *Mech Commander Gold*, *Trivial Pursuit*, *Transport Tycoon Deluxe*, *Civilisation II*, *GP Manager 2*, *M1 Tank Platoon 2*, *Tonka Construction*, *Star Trek – Generations*.



All



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PC CD-ROM

<http://www.hasbro-interactive.com>

MISSING IN ACTION

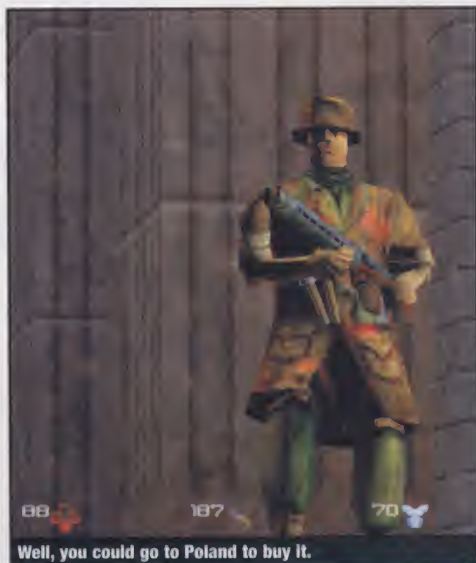
Mortyr is ready for war. The generals aren't

Rumours abound as to the fate of Polish developer Mirage's WWII shooter, *Mortyr*. Apparently completed, there are no concrete details on who will be publishing the game in the UK.

Interactive Magic was of course the original publisher, but in May they sold their CD-ROM releases to Ubi Soft. But Ubi Soft feel *Mortyr* doesn't fit in with their mass-market image, and so have been looking to offload the game onto another publisher.

The problem, however, doesn't seem to be who will publish *Mortyr* or when it's likely to debut – but exactly what will be released. Allegedly Ubi Soft have an incomplete version of the game, the code Interactive Magic transferred to them in May. Meanwhile the developers have been adding updates and levels to the game since, and have hinted that a sequel is already well on the way.

However, an official Ubi Soft source has confirmed that *Mortyr* is ready for release and that a publisher is still being sought. When this is resolved the marketing machine will have to get into gear, so for the time being, the bottom line is that *Mortyr* is unlikely to hit the shelves before November.



Well, you could go to Poland to buy it.

MORTYR READY FOR WARHAMMER

In a welcome move for *Warhammer 40,000* fans, Mirage seem to be busying themselves with creating the first 3D action game to be based on the sci-fi table-top wargame. Using an enhanced *Mortyr* engine, evidence suggests that players will be able to play either the Imperial or Chaos side, with weapons, armour and creatures in more colourful and animated form than can be seen at your local Games Workshop. As is the trend for 3D games these days, we can expect driveable vehicles, tactical features galore and plenty of multiplayer options. Let's hope there are no publisher problems with this one.



You'll be able to 'paint' your own uniforms.



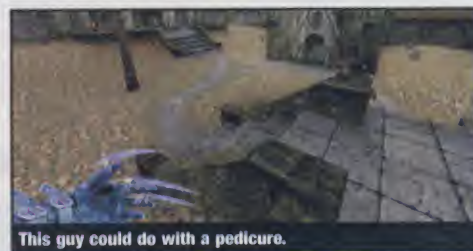
Mortyr goes all sci-fi later on.



There's talk that the swastikas could be taken out.



No release date has yet been set.



This guy could do with a pedicure.



wanted for low prices

Available at all good retailers.

SHORTS

RENEGADE RACERS

The fact that Dreamcast games will be so easy to port over to the PC means we could be seeing some pretty naff games in the coming months – and vice versa, of course. Not that that's any reflection on Virgin's *Renegade*



Racers, considering we haven't even seen it yet. Formulaic as it sounds, though, the game does have a few interesting features, namely comedy vehicles, power-ups and a wide variety of race modes. Whether Virgin have a *Mario Karts*-beater on their hands, we shall just have to wait and see at the end of the year.

ON A ROLLER

Unwilling to drop out of the charts just yet, Hasbro are looking to expand the surprise hit *Rollercoaster Tycoon* with *Added Attractions*. Out during October, the add-on will feature many new features for both the original scenarios,



as well as 25 newly created missions. New scenery – jungle and Jurassic – as well as some historical and more modern rollercoasters will beef up the pack.

Online gamers might like to pay a visit to www.rollercoastertycoon.com for a special Alton Towers scenario out soon.

FORD RACING

With 10 tracks, 12 cars and a lucrative Ford licence behind it, Empire's *Ford Racing* could well find itself speeding past *TOCA 2* in the racing game stakes. Featuring your usual range of bog-standard race modes, *Ford Racing* includes an intriguing career mode, where winning not only garners points, but prizes. In true *Gran Turismo* style, players can amass cash to improve or change their car, as well as use their winning reputation to get themselves into the best racing team. Eventually, with enough money to burn, drivers will be able to finance themselves and live in luxury for ever. All this and you only have to wait until November.



Real-world weapons include .45s and Uzis.

HITMAN

Eidos' answer to *Metal Gear Solid*

Talking to Eidos at ECTS, it was clear that they are planning big things for *Hitman*. Cited as a mixture of *Rainbow Six* and *Spec Ops*, it is a third-person action game of espionage and assassination. Not like *Rainbow Six* or *Spec Ops* at all, then – rather a PC tribute to the PlayStation's *Metal Gear Solid*. Or *Thief*, with guns.

Such throwaway comparisons are unfair, of course. *Hitman* at least looks immediately better than both, and with real-world settings and 3D-accelerated graphics, it should do well on the back of the current trend for realistic military action games.

Based across 20 locations, the game puts you in control of the eponymous assassin. At the beck and call of a mysterious underground agency, missions will involve sneaking around and killing a fair few of the 80 individual characters.

More than a simple waste 'em up, however, the game features a back story where the player finds himself covering up the illicit tracks of a mad genetic scientist. Already the AI seems more than capable, with guards acting on both sight and sound. Unfortunately, we have no idea how long we'll have to wait for the final product.



Off to kill some monks? That's not very friendly.



Well, that's a bit *Rainbow Six*, I suppose.



Strike a pose.

GRAND PRIX MANAGER

While we wait patiently for Geoff Crammond's *Grand Prix 3*, Hasbro are hoping to fill the gap with *Grand Prix World* – a Formula One management game that sees you as a back-seat driver in charge of your very own team.

As you would expect with FIA endorsement, presentation is slick and the list of features is impressive: you can hire engineers and designers,

negotiate driver contracts and sponsorship deals, set budgets and dabble on the stockmarket.

Like the sport itself (we use the term in its loosest sense), drivers will cry like babies if they don't get their way, even almost coming to blows if they don't get on with each other.

On the technical side, players must devise strategies for their drivers (which they'll

disregard anyway), tinker with computational fluid dynamics, and will even be able to send spies to uncover rivals' plans. In career mode, players will be able to head their team for ten seasons, by which time the cars will probably be solar-powered and fag sponsorship will have completely dried up anyway.

Grand Prix World is out in December.



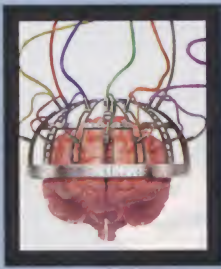
View the race on four – count 'em, four – 'photo-realistic TV screens'. Coo.



Will Damon still be driving in 2009? Probably.



Use 'full hospitality functions to attract sponsors'. Let's get some whores in, then.



TECHHEAD

A new generation of 3D chipsets are poised to complicate things further

★ **CONFUSED** Carlos Ruiz

PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT

3dfx and nVidia announce electrifying new technology

It's graphics cards yet again this month, with both 3dfx and nVidia throwing hype into the air like there's no tomorrow. They both have next-gen parts on the way, and the technologies concerned are 3dfx's T-Buffer, and nVidia's GeForce 256 graphic processing unit (GPU).

Matrox are still focused on their G400 MAX – and it's quite obvious that wind is being taken out of their sails. The MAX only recently prised the 3D crown from TNT2's hands, and sales will certainly suffer as a result of this speculation.

3dfx, www.3dfx.com, have consistently claimed that "frame rate is king", and have in the past abandoned visual treats for raw speed. However, they now seem to be concentrating on image quality, while still maintaining a 60fps target at what they consider to be the new gaming resolution: 1024x768.

Their patented T-Buffer not only improves the graphics of existing games, but also provides cinematic special effects for developers to implement in new games.

It performs true, full-scene spatial anti-aliasing, which removes jagged lines on polygons by adding intermediate shades along the edges. This makes the whole 3D display look smoother and gives the impression that it is running at a much higher resolution. Developers do not have to program support for this feature – in fact, it can be turned on for any existing game on the market.

The special effects possible with the T-Buffer technology are depth of field (where the focus can be adjusted on a 3D scene), motion blur (giving the

impression of speed), soft shadows (which look more realistic, with soft edges), and reflectance blur, among others.

Unfortunately, Microsoft are hesitant to include T-Buffer support in DirectX7 because it is specific to 3dfx. Since 3dfx will certainly not be licensing the technology, we might see a resurgence of games with Glide support – many developers such as EA, LucasArts and Epic Games have already signed up.

nVidia, www.nvidia.com, have not been twiddling their thumbs, either – their new NV10 (production name only) chip looks to be incredibly powerful. If the pre-release information is to be believed – and realistically, it cannot be far from the truth – polygon counts in games will go through the roof, resulting in much more detailed 3D environments.

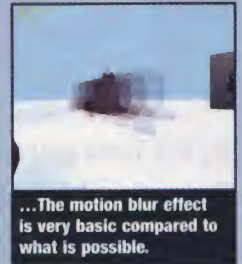
The NV10 will have on-chip geometry, taking a large amount of strain off the CPU by performing calculations on the graphics card. Fill rates are estimated to be around twice that of current high-end solutions, and performance could peak around 15-25 million triangles/sec.

Transformation and lighting acceleration is a main feature – and this will be supported in DirectX7. The RAMDAC will be pushed to 350MHz for yet more 2D speed.

This all sounds very impressive, but keep an eye on www.nv10.net for official announcements and finalised specifications. As with the TNT and TNT2, many manufacturers will be making NV10 boards – Creative, Guillemot and Elsa are all confirmed at the time of writing.



T-Buffer technology: depth of field draws your eye to the background...

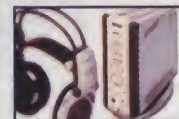


...The motion blur effect is very basic compared to what is possible.

It goes without saying that both new solutions will have proper 32-bit colour, AGP4x support and a maximum of at least 64Mb of on-board RAM. And it is entirely possible that both 3dfx and nVidia have even more tricks up their sleeves.

We will be seeing finished boards based on these technologies quite soon, but you probably won't be able to buy one in the UK until early next year. This is shaping up to be another major battle in 3D land – and we'll keep you posted all the way. Look out for a special two-page TechHead next month, reporting on the best of ECTS '99. And the low-down on the hottest hardware coming your way soon.

FACTCANNON



★ Now you can watch DVD films in heart-stopping Dolby Digital surround sound in the privacy and comfort of your very own armchair. Sony's

MDR-DS500 kit includes an AC3 decoder box and wireless headset, giving you 5.1 channels of sound at a distance of up to around 10m. Surf over to www.sony.com and try to convince yourself it's worth £300.

★ A light-gun kit is soon to appear on PC – the daringly titled 'Gun System' from ACT LABS (www.act-labs.com).



The system in question will consist of two guns, a small deck to holster them, and an additional hand-held

controller (with extra buttons and a small joystick, for use simultaneously with the guns). Fit the pass-thru adapter onto your monitor cable, install the drivers and you're away. All we need now are some decent games to support it. *Virtua Cop 3* sounds good to us...

★ Intel's (www.intel.com) super-delayed i820 motherboards are facing yet another setback. The 'Camino' boards, with AGP 2.0 slots, have come into conflict with TNT2 and G400 cards when operating at the maximum of AGP4x (1.1Gb/sec transfer rate). Otherwise, they're shaping up neatly – with 100/133MHz bus speeds and full PC '99 compatibility. Looks like we'll have to stick to AGP2x (532Mb/sec) for another few months.

DVD POINTS THE WAY

The format of the future is slowly growing up

Digital Versatile Disc has been with us for quite a while now, and were it not for the success of DVD movies, some might have said that this exciting new format had arrived way too early.

Although DVD-ROM drives are falling in price and are now featured in a lot of new PCs, the format is still very bare when it comes to software (which is what most PC-DVD owners are primarily interested in).

It can be described as a vicious circle. People will put off buying DVD-ROM drives until there is a lot more software available, but publishers will also be wary of producing this



The way forward.

software until there are a lot more PC users with DVD.

The potential of DVD is very much untapped on the PC. A one-sided/dual-layered disc can hold 8Gb of data, the same as a decent-sized hard drive. It can also store four

hours of video and a proper Dolby Digital/DTS soundtrack.

Eventually, we could be seeing vast, enormously detailed 3D worlds (with special effects provided by the latest 3D cards – see above) and top-quality video sequences to seamlessly convey the storyline and atmosphere – all topped off with stirring Dolby Digital sound effects and music. We can't wait.

UK PC GAMES CHAMPIONSHIPS 1999

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By the time you read this, the 1999 UK PC Games Championship will be over. The winning team will have walked away with £10,000, a spanking PC and lots more besides. As we write, however, there is still a week to go – and the major players are readying for battle

It's been a roaring success: prizes in the form of money, games and hardware have been thrown around with gay abandon and, more importantly, the UK's best gamers have been entered into the hall of fame, sure to be looked back upon as pioneers of a new sport. (Well, it could happen.)

Below we have compiled a listing of all the finalists, their

skills, favourite games and chances of success. If you're keen to enter next year's championship (already in the planning stages), note that these people will no doubt be on the roster. Study their form, learn and practise.

Next month, we'll report on the smiles and tears of the Grand Final itself. In the meantime, check out www.ukpcgc.com for the final scores.



Quake III



Unreal Tournament

UNLUCKY - LONDON FINALISTS


CHODAK

Name Daniel Whitmore
Profession Student
Home town High Wycombe

Age 17
Playing at final

Jimmy White's 2: Cueball, Midtown Madness

Favoured tactic Hit hard and hope

Also plays *Quake I, II, III*

All-time favourite game *Championship Manager 2*

Hobbies Football, pool, basketball and the Web

Home setup AMD K6-2 350MHz, 64Mb RAM


SKINNER

Name Mark Shropshall
Profession Student
Home town Maidenhead

Age 17
Playing at final

TA: Kingdoms, Actua Soccer 3

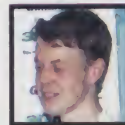
Favoured tactic Quick rush

Also plays *FIFA '99*

All-time favourite game *Total Annihilation*

Hobbies Football and tennis

Home setup Pentium II 300MHz, 64Mb RAM


JON

Name Jon Bright
Profession Student
Home town Marlow

Age 17
Playing at final

Quake III, Unreal Tournament

Favoured tactic Running away

Also plays *TA: Kingdoms*

All-time favourite game *Final Fantasy VII*

Hobbies Tennis, football and pool

Home setup Pentium II 300MHz, 96Mb RAM


CHRIS

Name Chris Low
Profession Student
Home town Marlow

Age 18
Playing at final

Age Of Empires 2, Need For Speed: Road Challenge

Favoured tactic Knight attack

Also plays *C&C: Tiberian Sun*

All-time favourite game *Populous 2*

Hobbies Football and pool

Home setup AMD K6-2 400MHz, 64Mb RAM

TEAM CHANCES

Unlucky qualified for the final in London after a very tight fight with Team Duellist. For much of the qualifier, the two teams were only separated by one

point. Many will regard them as outsiders but it should be remembered that they did have the disadvantage in London of competing first, and that they have had far more time to practise for the finals than the other teams. Chris on

Age Of Empires 2 and Jon on *Unreal Tournament* will be ones to watch for.

Strengths *Unreal Tournament, Age Of Empires 2*

Weaknesses Driving games, *Actua Soccer 3*

DODGY SPIDER - BIRMINGHAM FINALISTS


SLAP

Name Andy Ransome
Profession PC support technician

Home town Wolverhampton

Age 22

Playing at final

Actua Soccer 3, Midtown Madness

Favoured tactic Sucker punch

Also plays Every decent driving game ever, darts on *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball*

All-time favourite game *Pang*

Hobbies Drinking, music, sport

Home setup Pentium II 400MHz, 192Mb RAM


CHAPPY

Name Dave Chapman
Profession Internet architect

Home town Preston

Age 22

Playing at final

TA: Kingdoms, Jimmy White's 2: Cueball, Need For Speed: Road Challenge

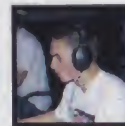
Favoured tactic Feet-first Killathon

Also plays Every decent strategy game ever

All-time favourite game *Total Annihilation*

Hobbies Drinking, sport, pubbin' and clubbin' it

Home setup Celeron 500MHz, 256Mb RAM


VLAD

Name Daniel Jack
Profession Office administrator

Home town Wolverhampton

Age 22

Playing at final

Age Of Empires 2, Unreal Tournament, Quake III

Favoured tactic Tactics?

Also plays *Kingpin, RollerCoaster Tycoon, Championship Manager 3*

All-time favourite game *FIFA '99 (PSX)*

Hobbies Drinking, reading, music, photography

Home setup AMD K6-2 350MHz, 64Mb RAM

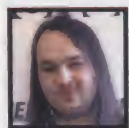
TEAM CHANCES

Many would say that, on the basis of their scores during their victory at Birmingham, Dodgy Spider will have a tough time in the finals. However, that would be a classic case of underestimating the resourcefulness of the underdog. In addition, they qualified early and so have had more time than most of the teams to practise. It is rumoured that they have even set up a custom-built LAN at home to practise for the finals. The favourites would be well advised to keep an eye on these guys.

Strengths *TA: Kingdoms*

Weaknesses Shoot 'em ups

HAPPY CAMPERS - GLASGOW FINALISTS



MAD KEZ

Name Kes Baird
Profession Civil servant
Home town Glasgow
Age 26
Playing at final *Quake III, Jimmy White's 2: Cueball*
Favoured tactic Grabbing the power-ups
Also plays *QuakeWorld, TOCA 2, Formula 1 games*
All-time favourite game *QuakeWorld*
Hobbies Playing computer games
Home setup Celeron 433MHz, 128Mb RAM



TYCO

Name Sam Baird
Profession Student
Home town Glasgow
Age 16
Playing at final *Actua Soccer 3, Midtown Madness*
Favoured tactic Seek and destroy
Also plays Racing games, first-person shooters
All-time favourite game *QuakeWorld*
Hobbies Computer games
Home setup Celeron 366MHz, 64Mb RAM



IRON FIST

Name Matthew Smith
Profession Student
Home town Glasgow
Age 17
Playing at final *Age Of Empires 2*
Favoured tactic Cautious deployment
Also plays Strategy games, first-person shooters
All-time favourite game *Close Combat 3*
Hobbies Playing rugby, computer games
Home setup Pentium 133MHz, 64Mb RAM



MEANDY

Name Andrew Nicol
Profession Student
Home town Paisley
Age 16
Playing at final *TA: Kingdoms, Unreal Tournament*
Favoured tactic Strategic counters
Also plays Strategy games, first-person shooters, flight sims
All-time favourite game *QuakeWorld*
Hobbies Listening to music, computer games
Home setup Dual 400MHz Celeron, 96Mb RAM

TEAM CHANCES

Happy Campers were pushed hard at the Glasgow qualifier by a team of veteran gamers, "The Daddies". From their qualifying scores, they should be in the middle of the pack. Remarkably for a team composed mostly of Quakers, they may have trouble from the other teams in the first-person shooters. However, *Quake III* is a whole different game and much more like the original *Quake* than *Quake II*. This may allow The Happy Campers to gain an unexpected victory in the final.

Strengths Snooker
Weaknesses Shoot 'em ups

SPECIAL OPS - MANCHESTER FINALISTS



ROCKET 8

Name Surjit Bharath
Profession Student
Home town Manchester
Age 17
Playing at final *Quake III, Unreal Tournament*
Favoured tactic Map control
Also plays *Final Fantasy, Command & Conquer*
All-time favourite game *Doom*
Hobbies Game playing, programming, football, running, listening to music
Home setup Pentium II 235MHz, 64Mb RAM



KaP

Name Kapil Bharath
Profession Student
Home town Manchester
Age 16
Playing at final *TA: Kingdoms, Age Of Empires 2*
Favoured tactic Tank and infantry rushing
Also plays *C&C series, TA series*
All-time favourite game *C&C: Red Alert*
Hobbies Game playing, football, cricket, listening to music
Home setup Pentium II 233MHz, 98MHz RAM



SMILE

Name Chris Jones
Profession Student
Home town Manchester
Age 17
Playing at final *Midtown Madness, Need for Speed: Road Challenge*
Favoured tactic Keep it straight
Also plays *Quake II, Final Fantasy VII, Motocross Madness*
All-time favourite game *Doom 2*
Hobbies Listening to music and online gaming
Home setup Pentium 166MHz, 32MHz RAM



EDGE

Name Barry Travis
Profession Student
Home town Manchester
Age 17
Playing at final *Actua Soccer 3, Jimmy White's 2: Cueball*
Favoured tactic None
Also plays *Final Fantasy VII, Championship Manager 2, FIFA series*
All-time favourite game Not sure
Hobbies Listening to music, snooker, football
Home setup Pentium 100MHz, 32Mb RAM

TEAM CHANCES

Special Ops certainly shook everyone up on their way to victory at Manchester, against stiff competition. Their scores at Manchester would only just be off the pace if they were replicated in the finals, but with a bit of luck in the strategy games, and some practice in the sports games, this young team could possibly win the finals. With some better equipment to practise on, they will certainly be a team to follow in the future.

Strengths *Quake II, driving games*
Weaknesses *Age Of Empires*

INEPT - DROP-IN FINALISTS



DAISHI

Name Andrew West
Profession Technical support
Home town Hampton
Age 19
Playing at final *Age Of Empires 2, TA: Kingdoms*
Favoured tactic Tank rush
Also plays *Quake, Quake III, Actua Soccer 3*
All-time favourite game *Lasersquad*
Hobbies Computers and work
Home setup Celeron 300MHz, 128Mb RAM



IOU

Name David Bulmer
Profession Student
Home town Hailsham
Age 15
Playing at final *Actua Soccer 3, Jimmy White's 2: Cueball*
Favoured tactic Winning
Also plays *Delta Force, Quake II, Motocross/Midtown Madness*
All-time favourite game *Motocross Madness*
Hobbies Football, golf, cricket
Home setup Pentium II 233MHz, 32Mb RAM

TEAM CHANCES

Inept were the pre-championship favourites. Daishi has put together a well-balanced team containing some well-known UK games players. Billox is Quakeadefica champion, IOU scored 109 goals in 15 minutes on *Actua Soccer 3*. Ramah is their veteran driver and Daishi is no slouch himself on the less well-publicised strategy circuit. However, they did get a rougher ride than expected while qualifying at the drop-in, where they won only two of the eight games outright. They are still favourites due to their strength in depth.

Strengths *Quake III, strategy games, Actua Soccer 3*
Weaknesses *Unreal*



RAMAH

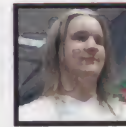
Name Andrew Males
Profession Engineer
Home town Kirkby-in-Ashfield
Age 28
Playing at final *Need For Speed: Road Challenge, Midtown Madness*
Favoured tactic Drive like bloody hell
Also plays *Motocross Madness, Warzone 2100, Aliens Vs Predator*
All-time favourite game *Motocross Madness*
Hobbies This 'n' that
Home setup Pentium III 450MHz, 128Mb RAM



BILLOX

Name James Page
Profession Web designer
Home town Farnham
Age 22
Playing at final *Quake III, Unreal Tournament*
Favoured tactic Camping
Also plays Flight sims
All-time favourite game Most definitely *Quake III*
Hobbies Playing *Quake III*
Home setup Pentium III 558MHz, 128Mb RAM

BLUE BOODAS - CARDIFF FINALISTS



TASAN

Name Greg Williams
Profession IT consultant
Home town Cardiff
Age 22
Playing at final *Quake III, TA: Kingdoms, Unreal Tournament, Age Of Empires 2*
Favoured tactic Death from above with the rocket launcher
Also plays Almost all games released
All-time favourite game *Quake II*
Hobbies Weight training, building PCs/networks
Current machine spec Pentium II 333MHz, 128Mb RAM

TEAM CHANCES

This dynamic duo butchered all comers on the way to their Cardiff qualifier victory. Tasan is one of the mainstays of Clan Unreal, one of the most successful UK *Quake II* clans and semi-finalists at EuroQuake. Tasan is no TA player but, with the phenomenal all-round abilities of Garr, they will be a tough pair to beat. However, the punishing 13-hour schedule of the finals is likely to favour teams of four and this may well be their undoing. Tasan will be the man to beat at shoot 'em ups, while Garr is pretty good with sports games.

Strengths Shoot 'em ups, driving and sports games
Weaknesses Strategy games



GARR

Name Gareth Tucker
Profession Student
Home town Cardiff
Age 19
Playing at final *Midtown Madness, Need For Speed: Road Challenge, Jimmy White's 2: Cueball, Actua Soccer 3*
Favoured tactic Long-range rail kills
Also plays Almost all games released
All-time favourite game *Quake II*
Hobbies Weight training, PC games
Current machine spec Pentium II 450MHz, 128Mb RAM



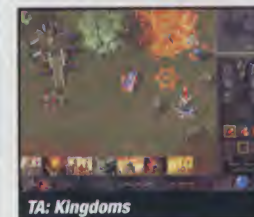
Actua Soccer 3



Midtown Madness



Need For Speed: Road Challenge



TA: Kingdoms

PROJECT I.G.I.

Huge game environments abound in this 'thinking' shooter



Fly choppers and take out trains.



"Someone broke my lightsabre!"

Touted as a 'first-person thinker shooter', the precariously titled Project IGI can be likened to a one-person *Rainbow Six*. Mixing a range of drivable vehicles in a real-world setting, the game, from Oslo's Innerloop Studios (they of *Joint Strike Fighter* fame), promises a deep, involving storyline centered around 'Jones', an ex-SAS operative working for the British government.

Deep cover missions ranged across the US, Europe, Africa and Russia will require you to steal planes, attack convoys, raid bases and, at one point, get to grips with the underside of a cable car.

Apart from some impressive graphical effects, what struck us at its unveiling at ECTS this year was the size of the game environments. The outdoor areas are quite something and the indoor sections are unceasingly tense. As always with this type of game, it's the AI that most people will be worried about, but judging by the developer's track record, we should have nothing to worry about when the game is released through Eidos next Easter.



Certainly looks better than *Delta Force*.



Beware low-flying aircraft.

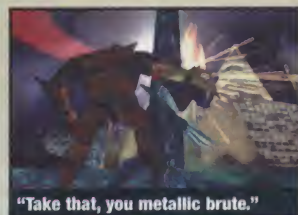


Ah, those come-to-bed eyes.

METAL KOMBAT



The Halitosis-Breath Gun in full effect.



"Take that, you metallic brute."



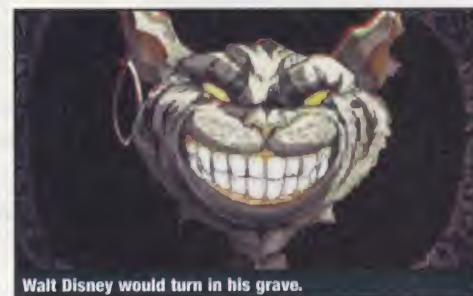
Release date: 'When it's done.'

Mild shareware hit *One Must Fall 2097*, the 2D robot-style beat 'em up, is getting a sequel of sorts in the form of *One Must Fall: Battlegrounds*. Now in full 3D, the game again puts you in charge of a 90ft metal behemoth, with the aim of becoming champ by swatting your opponents down with lightning reflexes and ranged weaponry.

Unlike its predecessor, *Battlegrounds* won't feature any upgrade options, but rather a series of 'express tournaments' designed to be fast-paced, with multi-robot scraps at every step. No word on the number of robots or weapons, release date or publisher, but as soon as we hear any more, we'll let you know.

ALICE IN QUAKELAND

Ex-ID designer American McGee, who worked on *Doom 2*, *Quake* and *Quake II*, has announced his first project as *Alice*, a 3D shooter based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland*. Thankfully, the game will have more in common with Carroll's dark, opiate vision than Disney's puerile rendering, with Alice taking on the evil Queen Of Hearts as well as some new characters developed especially for the game. Interestingly, the game will be level-based, with a third-person perspective used in the single-player game and a first-person view for multiplayer scraps, with weapons based on toys. We can only guess as to the look of the game, but with the *Quake III Arena* engine running the show and the mighty EA as publisher, *Alice* is sure to be one of the most twisted games ever.



Walt Disney would turn in his grave.

ORC KEEPER



Savour some Middle-Earth Tolkien frolics in Sierra's real-time strategy game



Train your greenskins in specially created attacks.

More information and fresh screenshots from *Orcs: Revenge Of The Ancient*, Sierra's 3D real-time strategy game and the first to be based in Tolkien's Middle-Earth.

Commanding a squad of four orcs, the aim is to choose, train and equip your troops and take them into a variety of missions. Unfortunately, being of low intelligence, the orcs will be prone to disobedience in training and battle, prompting a range of suitable punishments to be levied

at them. Planning will be integral to your success, with stats and skills a-plenty, and various weapons to purchase with booty from each battle. Fighting moves can also be set up using the game's Combo Builder.

Frodo and friends will be absent from the game, apart from a few unnamed cameo appearances, but Tolkien fans can look forward to seeing Sauron, Ithilien Rangers and a few more familiar races. A release date has yet to be announced, but mid-2000 is likely.



Buy swords, axes and daggers.



Orcs are set at the beginning of the War of the Ring.



Multiplayer fans can take their clan online.

£10 OFF* UNREAL TOURNAMENT & HOMEWORLD



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Because *Homeworld* has slipped past its early September release date, Gameplay have allowed us to run last month's special offer again. You can read all about the game on p72, after which you'll no doubt want to get on the blower and demand your very own copy. At a more than reasonable £24.99, you'd be mad not to.

But if *Homeworld* isn't your bag, maybe some first-person action will get your mouse finger twitching. *Unreal Tournament*, you may remember, received ringing praise last month, notching up a classic rating of 90%. What better game to while away the weeks waiting for *Quake III Arena* to appear? Again at the reduced price of £24.99 – £10 off what your local games store will be asking – *Unreal Tournament* is a bargain.

To qualify for a discount, call Gameplay's sales hotline on 0870 444 0888. Make sure you have your copy of *PC ZONE* to hand, as the sales person will ask you a question related to what's in this issue.



Homeworld: 3D strategy has never looked so good.



Unreal Tournament – great to share.



Team up with next-gen Unreal.

<AFFAIRS>



<REVENGE>

<BETRAYAL>

www.team17.com

TEAM 17
MICRO PROSE



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www.gameplay.com for more special offers.

The Man who KNOWS

BREAKIN' THE LAW

In a major offensive against piracy, six game developers and publishers and an industry trade group have filed a federal lawsuit against numerous alleged piracy rings. The purported rings are some of the most sophisticated yet, employing hundreds of people around the world in global counterfeiting operations. The suit has been filed by the **Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA)**, along with **LucasArts, Acclaim, 3DO, Infogrames, Bethesda and Interplay**, and alleges numerous violations of law. The defendants reportedly belong to the groups **Class, Paradigm and Razor 1911**, and were allegedly able to acquire pre-production versions of games and remove the anti-piracy mechanisms. They would then upload the games to the Internet and other ring members in Russia would copy the offering on to CDs, which were then available for sale the same day as the official release.

To compound the piracy problem further, the long-awaited **Tiberian Sun** was available on the Internet four days before its European release. The full German version appeared on a website on August 23, and contained every level, missing only the FMV and online support. The site has been closed down, but the game's publisher, **EA**, is concerned that the code will have spread across hundreds of mirror sites, and they are working with police in Germany to find the culprits. The appearance of the game is all the more worrying considering the extreme security employed by developers **Westwood**, who were loath to let a copy out of their building to avoid such an occurrence.

More skullduggery involves the case of a college student convicted of illegally distributing thousands of pounds worth of software programs, movies and pieces of music from his website. **University of Oregon** student **Jeffrey Levy**, 22, was charged under the 1997 **No Electronic Theft Act** after university computer managers informed the **FBI**, having noticed high volumes of traffic on one of its servers. It is the US government's first Internet piracy conviction, and Levy is to be sentenced in November, when he could find himself facing a three-year stretch.

Yet more legal mither involves **GT**, who have only recently settled a six-month wrangle with **Midway**. Their latest suit comes from German developer **StarPlay** who are looking for over £3 million pounds in damages, alleging that GT Interactive's German operation, **GT Value**, knowingly and fraudulently obtained an unauthorised copy of StarPlay's bowling game, **Alley 19 Bowling**, and sold it under a different name.

And finally, if you think you'd like to work in this upright, decent industry of ours, a website has opened enabling you to do just that. Dedicated to those seeking jobs in the interactive entertainment industry, www.gamejobs.uk is the first service of its kind in the United Kingdom. Forget it.

TECHHEAD UPDATE

Rumours of a Microsoft console on the way

STOP PRESS

If you've read this month's Tech Head (page 33) about Microsoft's reluctance to side with 3Dfx's new 3D graphics technology, it seems all the more likely that Microsoft are indeed working on a top-secret, next-generation games console, as is being reported in the US.

The console, apparently named 'X-Box', is said to centre around an Intel 500MHz processor (or AMD Athlon, depending on who you believe), nVidia's new GeForce 256 GPU and a modified version of Windows CE. Microsoft have done nothing to dispel the rumours: "It is Microsoft policy not to comment on rumours," is about as much as they'll say.

Obviously, these rumblings, if they are true, will hurt Sega, with their Dreamcast soon to be launched and itself operating on

Windows CE. What is even more interesting is that, like PCs, a number of manufacturers are supposedly planning their own variants on the 'X-Box', which is sure to mean more competition, lower prices, greater standardisation and an even richer Bill Gates.

The effect a Microsoft console would have on the PC market is unknown, but like Microsoft's games, it could take a few years before it makes any serious impact. If, of course, the rumours are true...



An artist impression of Microsoft's 'X-Box'.

DRAGON'S BLOOD

After coming away from Interplay's ECTS stand quietly impressed with their winter release, *Dragon's Blood*, we were surprised to find the screenshots on the press CD in a folder called dbts2. Could it be? *Dragon's Blood* – the game formerly known as *Die By The Sword 2*? Oh dear.

Thankfully, there should be no cause for concern. The irksome control method from the first game has gone. Instead, the game plays much as a traditional third-person action game should. Now there's a relief.

Dragon's Blood has three characters to choose from – warrior, priestess or wizard – as well as RPG-style advancement and an impressive array of creatures which, as in the first game, are prone to losing the odd limb in Pythonesque combat. Sounds promising.



Bloody traps.



Rather than having dozens of weapons, you have just a few, each of which can be powered up.



"Come back! I'll bite yer legs off!"

PROBABLY A ROBBERY

Like Eidos' *Gangsters, Heist* from Virgin is a real-time strategy game of crime and corruption. Unlike *Gangsters*, however, the aim is not to control a 1920s city, but to rob a more modern one in linear fashion.

Set across 20 missions, *Heist* allows you to recruit gang members and rob anything, from backwater petrol stations to hi-tech banks, with police and eventually the FBI out to bring you down. Plans have to be drawn up and the right equipment and skills used to pull off the perfect crime, all without the fuzz sniffing around. At the moment it's graphically spartan, but we have some way to go until next spring's release.

"It's everyone's secret ambition to pull off the perfect crime," commented a Virgin spokesperson. "I know it's mine..." Let's hope they won't be releasing another *Gangsters*, eh?



OUR MOST WANTED

Until we put a system in place whereby you can vote online for the games you are most looking forward to, we've decided to tell you what we think are the ten games you should be looking out for in the run-up to Christmas. This is based on games we've actually seen, rather than on the basis of a few screenshots and a hastily-written press release

- 1 **Ultima Ascension** (EA) ___ October
- 2 **Quake III Arena** (Activision) ___ November
- 3 **The Nomad Soul** (Eidos) ___ November
- 4 **Age Of Empires II: The Age Of Kings** (Microsoft) ___ November
- 5 **Nocturne** (Take 2) ___ October
- 6 **Indiana Jones & The Infernal Machine** (Activision) ___ November
- 7 **Half-Life: Opposing Force** (Sierra) ___ November
- 8 **Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation** (Eidos) ___ September
- 9 **Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear** (Take 2) ___ November
- 10 **The Sims** (EA) ___ November

TICKERTAPE

STARTS++ Red Storm are developing a space-combat action game. Called *UFS Vanguard*, it should be out next June **++STOP++** 3D real-time strategy game *Genesis: Aperia 7* (PCZ#78) has been signed up by Sierra, renamed *Ground Control* and given a release date of early next year **++STOP++** Just for the record, *Independence War: Defiance*, the expanded version of last year's space sim, is to be available at the knock-down price of £18. Which is nice **++STOP++** *Evil Dead* star Bruce Campbell is to appear in NovaLogic's space sim *Tachyon: The Fringe* **++STOP++** Take 2 have signed up the publishing rights to Bungie's *Oni* and *Halo*. We will have more on the latter in the next issue **++STOP++** Ubi Soft have a rally game in the works, from the *Grand Prix Simulation* team **++STOP++** Blue Byte have announced *Settlers IV* and *Battle Isle IV* for next year **++STOP++** *Carmageddon* publishers SCI have acquired the rights to *The Italian Job*, so expect a mini-driving/heist game in 2001 **++STOP++** *Carmageddon: The Death Race 2000* has slipped to next spring **++ENDS**

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

Never believe release dates, they're all wrong. If they weren't, these three games would've been out by now



TEAM FORTRESS 2: BROTHERHOOD OF ARMS (Valve/Sierra)

LAST SEEN PCZ #73

ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE Summer '99

Releasing just a screenshot every month, it seems, this one alone was enough to instigate whooping cries of joy as *TF2*'s first weapon is unveiled.

The great thing is that we can imagine the whole thing moving. At E3 and ECTS this year, a rolling demo just two minutes long attracted a crowd for the whole three days.

After less recent developments of scalable mesh technology, volumetric fog and the like, the latest news from the front is that the maps will be huge (up to eight times bigger than in *Half-Life*), voice communications will be central (you'll even see other players' lips move realistically), and you won't need a 3D card to play it. While there will be vehicles such as tanks, choppers and landing craft, you won't be able to drive any of them. A shame, yes, but that won't stop us waiting for the next wave of screenshots with a box of tissues to hand. **NOW OUT** Spring 2000, or 'when it's done'

GALLEON (Confounding Factor/Interplay)

LAST SEEN PCZ #71

ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE Summer '99

From the creators of not only the original *Tomb Raider* game, but of Lara Croft herself, *Galleon* is worthy of anyone's attention for that reason alone. Like *Tomb Raider*, *Galleon* features a busty star by the name of Rhama, the sword-swinging lady captain of the good ship Endeavour.

The style of the game is not unlike a Disney cartoon – the characters are square-jawed, thin-legged and superbly animated. The inspiration of *Monkey Island* is still in evidence and the colourful landscapes provide the perfect backdrop for this promising third-person action adventure.

Rhama may not end up promoting Lucozade, but after our reacquaintance at this year's ECTS, the game looks as though it could easily put a stop to Lara and her adventures.

NOW OUT Spring 2000

SLAVE ZERO (Accolade/Infogrames)

LAST SEEN PCZ #67

ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE Early '99

The demo has been and gone, so where's the game? Well, developers Accolade were in something of a transitional period, having left EA and joined Infogrames. Everything is now back on track and *Slave Zero* will be released next month. We were treated to a playtest and found the game living up to its promise of big robots trampling cars, shooting each other and making a mess of the futuristic city they roam around in. For an idea of what it's like, think of the mech bits in *Shogo* and you'll be 90 per cent there. **NOW OUT** October '99

Galleon about to throw Lara overboard.



Slave Zero – a Slave to the system?



HOTSHOTS

Lara Croft, the world's first computer pin-up girl, is back for a fourth adventure – one where she really does raid tombs for a change

TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION

★ Eidos • Out November

The last *Tomb Raider* game? We doubt it, but it's almost certainly the last we'll see of Lara Croft in her current form. Not that she's having a breast reduction mind, but surely there's no place on Earth left for Lara to explore? Mind you, seeing the old gal in silver hot pants cavorting across the Martian wasteland could be fun.

In *The Last Revelation* Lara is based solely in tomb-ridden Egypt. Having to contend with skeletons, scorpions, mummies and people trying to sell camel rides is only half of it, however. A new inventory system, smaller, more puzzle-based levels and a wealth of new moves mean Lara fans have a lot more to look forward to. Thankfully they won't have long to wait – about a month, in fact.



Lights.



The LED signals the revolutionary heart beating inside Microsoft® IntelliMouse® Explorer, while the ergonomic design ensures that it feels as good as it looks.

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IntelliMouse Explorer uses advanced Microsoft® IntelliEye™ technology to see rather than feel its way. By using an optical sensor (instead of a mouse ball) to scan the work surface up to 1,500 times a second, it accurately tracks the smallest motion, making it far more responsive and precise than a traditional mouse.

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Lost in France...

THE NOMAD

We visit the land of rabid dogs to bring you the latest on this undeniably French game. Chomping onions: *Steve Hill*



The lovely Iman, wife of Bowie.

Dakme't, apparently. Didn't Adam Ant copyright that nose stripe?



Enay'd is this bloke's name. The New Romantic revival starts here.

Itzam'a fails to realise the Notting Hill Carnival has finished.



SOUL

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Quantic Dream

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive

WEBSITE www.quanticroam.com

OUT October 1999

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Involvement of David Bowie
- ★ Complete freedom of movement in a huge 3D world
- ★ Unique virtual reincarnation concept
- ★ Real-time facial motion capture

Paris: home of Sacha Distel, Gauloises and men in long coats meeting in brasseries (or possibly brassieres) at dawn. The French capital is also home to Quantic

Dream, developers of *The Nomad Soul*, the game formerly known as *Omikron*. That's home in the loosest sense of the word, as despite assurances that they had tidied up in preparation for the visit of *PC ZONE*, it was akin to visiting a student squat. A recent survey revealed that the French shower less than anyone else in Europe, and the upended mattress stood in the bath would appear to confirm this. That's not xenophobic, that's a fact.

We're here primarily to see the game, though, which is an attractive looking effort, as the surrounding pictures will confirm. What it's all about is less easy to explain, though. It's a sprawling affair, encompassing action, adventure, beat 'em up, first-

Dreamers, whose virtual concerts it is possible to attend. As ideas go, it's certainly an odd one, and you can almost imagine Alan Partridge earnestly barking into his dictaphone: "David Bowie to star in virtual reality computer game set in parallel dimension, along with his lovely wife Iman. Must, repeat must, include original music. Call Bill Oddie..."

MOORCOCK, MICHAEL

As for the story, we don't want to give too much away about the tales of Astaroth, the Prince of Darkness, and his quest for souls. Suffice to say that the characters have ludicrous names, and that it's aimed squarely at people who spent their youth reading *Lord Of The Rings* when they should have been out playing football. As such, it should appeal to a broad cross-section of the PC gaming community.

All you really need to know is that the action is set in the fictional city of Omikron, a vast metropolis full of sick and twisted characters and an innovative public transport system.

You begin the game supposedly as yourself and then enter the body of a character about whom you know nothing. Clues are offered as to your identity, and while you're about it, you might as well shag the poor bloke's wife (the game features an early sex scene, albeit not motion-captured).

As a nation, the French are pretty open about sex. Bare breasts are rife on beaches and in adverts, while

UPDATE

"You enter the body of a character about whom you know nothing. Clues are offered and, while you're about it, you might as well shag the poor bloke's wife"

person shooter and David Bowie.

Yes, following his Internet dabblings, the Thin White Duke has launched himself headlong into the wonderful and frightening world of video games. Despite the fact that he hasn't written a decent tune since *Space Invaders* ruled the chip shop, Bowie provides all the game's music, in conjunction with Tin Machine co-founder Reeves Gabrel. Bowie also appears in the game, both as a key character named Boz, and as the lead singer of an in-game band called The

nightclubs think nothing of livening things up by screening soft porn. They absolutely love a bit of it, and this is a theme that continues throughout *The Nomad Soul*. Whores and strippers appear intermittently, along with fairly graphic artwork, some of which has had to be toned down to appease the Americans.

However, it's not a deal clincher, and thankfully *The Nomad Soul* should have more to hang itself on than a couple of pixelated nipples. The main hook the marketing bods are trying to get across is the idea of virtual reincarnation, claiming that the player's soul will be projected into the game's universe, where it will reside indefinitely. What it actually means is that if you die in the game, you take control of the first person who comes into contact with your corpse – a concept that would suggest you'll spend a lot of time as a paramedic or a necrophiliac.

CV | **quanticroam**

QUANTIC DREAM

The Nomad Soul will be the first game from this new French developer, although they are also working on a secret project code-named *Quark*. Not secret any more, then.



Fighting practice takes place in a special arena. Nice reflections.



Xaar & Soks, the Keith Harris & Orville of Omikron.



Samyaz'ainjangir, obviously.



Ganji is clearly not a man to be messed with.



Wrestling with demons is commonplace in the city of Omikron.

← Quantic Dream also claim *The Nomad Soul* will be the first video game ever to feature real-time facial motion capture, although we can remember reading a similar claim about a different game over three years ago. Admittedly, Roger Moore-style raised eyebrows are thrown about with gay abandon, but the lip-synching is currently no more convincing than formative kids' TV show *Heidi* – albeit with Swiss goat farmers supplanted by demons from a parallel dimension.

There is a hell of a lot of chat to get through during the course of the game – although, thankfully, not quite as much as the interminable *Outcast* – *The Nomad Soul* clocks in at around 16 hours of dialogue, as opposed to the 60 hours of Charlie Brooker's favourite chatathon.

The Nomad Soul is at least interspersed with action, whether it's walking and driving around the massive city, or simply punching and kicking people about the neck and face. The beat 'em up sections were apparently motion-captured by a Jujitsu world champion and a Tae Kwon Do European champion, but – as with every beat 'em up ever made – it is quite possible to win by randomly pressing buttons, and it's never going

shooting game or a fighting game. We just thought: 'We are in a movie – what do you do in a movie?'

"And you do all these things – you can use a gun, you can talk, you can do different things. We just tried to get this movie-like feeling. I think a lot of games will go in this direction in the future – not mixing different types of game, but inventing a new type where you're free."

The cinematic feel can't be denied, from the way the opening sequence segues into the credits, accompanied by the Bowie title track, to the numerous wide-screen cut-scenes.

Clearly a big film fan, David also came up with the story behind the game and cites such influences as *1984* and *Brazil*, as well as a genuine theory about parallel dimensions – something that French game developers seem obsessed with. Why?

"I don't know," says David Cage. "I think it's a matter of imagining something else – something different. It's quite appealing to French people. I don't know why. It's probably a cultural thing."

ATHENA POSTER

Cultural differences aside, *The Nomad Soul* is shaping up to be a curious game. With its fondness for demons

“You do all these things – you can use a gun, you can talk... We just tried to get this movie-like feeling”

QUANTIC DREAM CHIEF EXECUTIVE DAVID CAGE

to be a match for *Tekken*, or whatever console buffs are currently into. Likewise, the occasional first-person shooter sections are scarcely in the same league as *Quake* or *Half-Life*.

FILM GAME


What's the big idea, then? The chief executive of Quantic Dream, David Cage, explains: "Our goal wasn't to make a *Quake* or *Half-Life*, it was completely different. We never intended to make a shooting game that's better than *Quake III* because those guys have been making first-person shooters for ages. Our goal was to make a first-person shooter where you have fun, it's easy to use and you have a reason to fight. When you play *Quake*, you kill people in corridors but you don't have the faintest idea why. In *Omikron*, the concept was to have a story before this shooting sequence, have a story after and, depending on what you've done in the adventure before and the result of the shooting sequence, different things will happen.

"To me, it's an interactive movie. Not like five years ago, where it was just FMV that you couldn't play – it's now an interactive movie in real-time 3D. So we never thought about making it an adventure game or a

and big robots, it's almost the gaming equivalent of a concept album – a theory that's given weight by the Roger Dean-style artwork (the kind of pictures seen adorning the works of navel-gazing prog rock megaliths Yes and Genesis during the more self-indulgent parts of the Seventies).

The involvement of a major international recording star certainly gives it an edge, as the game's producer, Hervé Albertazzi, explains: "The whole involvement of Bowie was not so much to contribute to the gameplay as to be part of the Omikron universe and be part of the general atmosphere. This was a collaboration – it was not a case of David Bowie coming to us and saying: 'I'm going to do a game and this is how I am going to be in there.'

"He came to Paris and stayed with the team for three weeks, learnt everything about the universe, what they were wanting to do and everything, and then sort of adapted his creativity to this particular game."

It's certainly an ambitious project, and whether it turns out to be more than the sum of its parts remains to be seen. But you can rest assured that we'll be letting you – and David Bowie – know whether it's a *Space Oddity* or *The Laughing Gnome*. 



The Temple of Qalisar, which is absolutely rife with prostitutes.



A secret tomb. At least, it was secret...



The French will use any excuse to throw in a bit of cleavage.

Q&A

HERVÉ ALBERTAZZI



An expert in three karate disciplines and a committed biker, the producer of *The Nomad Soul* is not a man to mess with

PCZ What's the first game you ever played?

HERVÉ Pong.

PCZ Best game you've ever played?

HERVÉ Flashback.

PCZ What's the last game you paid good money for?

HERVÉ *Dungeon Keeper 2* and now *Hidden & Dangerous*.

PCZ What was the last fight you had?

HERVÉ The last fight I had took place in London, actually. It was the first time I brought my bike from Paris. I got lost and ended up in a gas station in Brixton. Two completely drunk blokes wanted to have a run at my bike, and since I'd been spending 15 minutes trying to find my way, I was quite pissed off. When one of them started insisting on getting on my bike he just ate my helmet, really.

PCZ He did what?

HERVÉ He just ate my helmet. I keep it in my hand. This is when the guy from the gas station came out of his booth and I guess that sort of psychologically gave me an edge and the guys just left.

PCZ So they picked on the wrong guy?

HERVÉ It wasn't very karate that night – it was more like: 'I've got a helmet, I'm going to use it.'

DON'T CALL ME THE LAUGHING NOMAD

The Thin White Duke speaks

Bowie contributes eight original tracks to the game, which are soon to be released by Virgin on an album called *Hours*. He also provided all the game's incidental music and earlier this year held a press conference at the E³ show in Los Angeles. Here's what he said.

"I think the idea of developing a soundtrack for a game is really quite unusual. Writing songs specifically for a game is really a compelling factor. It was really the one thing we wanted to do, especially because they didn't give us a preconceived idea of what we should do. We were left to our own devices.

"I don't play games. Everybody knows that. No, you've got to understand that my son is the games merchant round our household. Of course, I've played *Tomb Raider*, just like every hot-blooded male who's in love with Lara momentarily, until I realised she wasn't real.

"The idea of producing a soundtrack for anything that has a computer orientation is a real magnet for me, and we approached it

as if we were doing a film. What we're trying to do more than anything else is to provide an emotional heart to the game. That's because the one thing I did find by going through the games that I viewed before we started work was that a lot of them have a cold emotional drive. In fact, rarely do they have an emotional drive. I think the most unusual aspect of writing for this is that we've produced romantic pieces. We've developed a secret life for the character of Boz and for a number of the other characters.

"The one thing we noticed immediately is that most of the soundtrack material that's used in games is taken off albums. Very rarely is music actually produced specifically for the game. They just sort of take an album track here and an album track there, and it sort of works some of the time. We spent quite some time in Paris, working with the design team over there, understanding the depth and the many levels of the game involved, so we got a pretty fair idea of what the scenario was."



Bowie as Boz, a character roughly based on his current look.

Bowie as lead singer of in-game band The Dreamers. Has anyone else noticed that *The Nomad Soul* is a suitably Franglais anagram of *Tu es old ham, no?*





They're absolutely drop-dead gorgeous.



Not a fan of religious iconography, then.



"What are you going to do, dig me out of here? Get the key, you arse."

Who turned out the lights? It's...

NOCTURNE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Terminal Reality/Gathering of Developers

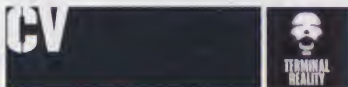
PUBLISHER Take 2

WEBSITE www.nocturnegame.com

OUT October

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ A truly scary action/adventure with bags of atmosphere
- ★ Graphics and engine to impress even the undead
- ★ Variety of missions, puzzles and monsters
- ★ Gory enough for the sickest horror fan and eerie enough for those more inclined to suspense



TERMINAL REALITY

This may be their first action/adventure, but the team has a catalogue of space shooters and driving games

1995 *Terminal Velocity*

1996 *Fury 3*
Monster Truck Madness

1997 *Hellbender*
CART Precision Racing

1998 *Monster Truck Madness 2*

1999 *Fly!*

Everybody is scared of the dark when they're a kid. **Mark Hill** still is

The town is dark and deadly quiet as you approach the steps to the old house. The floorboards creak, you think you hear a noise, the door swings slowly open and your heart starts racing. You're out of bullets, and all you have to defend yourself with is a blunt spade which you wave about frantically as you rush in. There's that noise again, like the gargle of a dying animal, and you turn around to face it. A walking corpse, a soulless but murderous carcass, lunges towards you from an unlit room. A blow from the spade dislodges one of its arms, which lands on the wooden floor with a heavy thud, but the thing keeps coming until you split its skull open like an egg. The smell isn't pleasant. You see woodwormed stairs leading to a pitch black basement. You don't want to go, but there are people somewhere in this house and you've got to find them. Then, out of the silence, a sinister music starts to play, letting you know something nasty is waiting for you. An embarrassing dribble twists a wet path down

your legs, and your shoes squelch as you walk down.

The scene should be immediately familiar, if you were lucky enough to get last month's *Nocturne* demo up and running (see 'The Infernal Machine' panel right). "Our primary goal is to scare the crap out of people," say developers Terminal Reality. "All the shadows, sound effects, music and monstrous creatures are built to frighten." Good. So it's not just us being complete wussies then.

important that the team understands the true nature of fear." Judging from their influences, TR have a pretty good grasp on shitting-your-pants scariness. *Evil Dead*, *The Thing*, *Alien* and *The Shining* are some of the films mentioned (and, from what we've seen, we would add *Night Of The Living Dead* as an essential point of reference). Other less obviously horror-related but equally dark sources like *Batman* comics, *Bladerunner*, Dashiell

"We're trying to infuse the game with those elements of the real world that frighten us... It's important the team understands the true nature of fear"

JEFF MILLS, PRODUCTION LEADER

EVIL INFLUENCE

They admit all their darkest fears and nightmares were let loose while putting this action/adventure together: "We're also trying to infuse the game with those elements of the real world that frighten us. There are monsters-a-plenty, but the player will also know the fear of wondering if he's alone in a dark corridor. It's

Hammett and Raymond Chandler are mentioned. And, of course, there would be no use denying the shadow of certain PlayStation modern classics: "We've used the sort of anticipation, atmosphere-building and fear of the dark you can find in *Silent Hill* to make a truly scary game. It's not all about monsters. They're not as scary as the unseen evil that



You have to play *Nocturne* in the dark. Just keep the light switch handy.



Behind you, look behind you...



You'll never get those stains out, you know.



Doc Holiday shows some grrrrl power.



Poe's *The Pit & The Pendulum* didn't end like this.

screws with your mind. But there are a fair share of jump-out-of-your-seat scares that the *Resident Evils* so thoroughly accomplished. As far as other games go, the *Alone In The Dark* and *Ecstatica* series spring immediately to mind."

SPOOKY

Spookhouse, the organisation you belong to in the game, is responsible for investigating and confronting the forces of darkness in their many forms, which include vampires, werewolves and even aliens. Despite this *X-Files* set-up, though, there is no worldwide conspiracy to uncover, just lots of roaming monsters making life in the 1930s interesting. To give the game a balance, the Stranger (the mysterious character you control) is aided along the way by computer-controlled sidekicks, all of whom are extremely useful in combat. This only makes the moments when you must face the hordes by yourself all the more terrifying. How much help you get solving puzzles will also vary from mission to mission. Sometimes you will be prompted in the right direction while at other times you'll

just have to figure things out for yourself. "Our goal has been to balance and include a wide variety of puzzles and action to appeal to as many players as possible," TR tell us. The settings will share in that diversity, going from Texas redneck towns to German mountains and castles, all of which benefit from incredibly detailed, prerendered backgrounds.

The engine creates such a realistic world in terms of lighting, reflections and gravity that the monsters become believable. Clothes, shadows and bodily fluids are so authentic you'll be afraid to get too close to the screen in case the blood splatters on your cheeks or the flamethrower singes your eyebrows. In fact, you will be very afraid, full stop. [X]

THE INFERNAL MACHINE

Nocturne sports the technology of the future – so come on, it's time to stop living in the past

No doubt there were many of you who were disappointed, if not bewildered, to see the recommended specs needed to run last month's *Nocturne* demo. Anything less than a kick-ass ninja PC would have felt like a hobbling zombie, which is a shame considering how good it is. You'll be relieved to hear that the developers are working on lowering the requirements all the time. "With the proper short-cuts, a poor soul running a PII 266 with 64Mb RAM should be able to run the game, but it will be a shadow of the game at its full glory on the recommended machine," Terminal Reality warn us. "It saddens us that this game requires such power and some people won't get to see everything, but you have to admit that the payoff on the proper machine is worth it." It's official – If you want to play the best-looking games you'll have to use the best-performing PCs. You have been warned: in a year's time a Pentium III will be essential for all new releases. Look out for a more elderly PC-friendly demo soon.

Q&A

TERMINAL REALITY



The *Nocturne* team stop stalking cemeteries and start talking niceties

PCZ What is the first game you ever played?

TR Most of us cut our teeth on *Pong*.

PCZ What is, in your opinion, the best game you've ever played?

TR Our tastes are pretty varied. Our favourite games range all the way from *Ghost & Goblins* and *Day Of The Tentacle* to *Half-Life*.

PCZ And the last one you paid good money for?

TR It's been a while since we bought any games, but *Driver* kicks ass.

PCZ Have you ever been in a fight? And, if so, what happened?

TR Most of us were dorks at school, and always got picked on. That might have played some part in our decision to get into this industry. Level designer Joe Wampole fondly recalls punching one of these thugs in the jaw, knocking his head into the wall beside him. He wasn't bothered by bullies again.

You too could manage a building society...

PHARAOH

A bunch of lazy layabouts, the Egyptians never rushed anything. Just like *Craig Vaughan*, in fact

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Impressions
PUBLISHER Sierra
WEBSITE www.pharaoh1.com
OUT November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ It's from the team that brought you *Caesar III*
- ★ The different civilisation brings new challenges
- ★ You actually get to build pyramids and Sphinxes
- ★ There's an idiot-proof map and a scenario editor

In the year since its release, *Caesar III* (PCZ#70, 92%) has earned a reputation as the definitive Roman Empire builder. So, having exhausted the strategic possibilities of that era, developers

Impressions now plan a prequel of sorts, in the shape of *Pharaoh*, set – as the title suggests – in Ancient Egypt. Using an enhanced *Caesar III* engine, your basic goal remains unchanged: build and survive. The route to success couldn't be more different from *Caesar III*. You see, the Egyptians and Romans had a completely opposing culture, a fact that's reflected in the diversity of gameplay between the two titles. The Romans were conquerors, whose main goal was expansion through military might, whereas the Egyptians were God-fearing builders and merchants, content with subsisting from the river Nile.



IMPRESSIONS SOFTWARE

These guys have been creating engaging strategy games for the best part of a decade

1993-1998 *Caesar Trilogy*

1994 *Lords Of The Realm*

1996 *Lords Of The Realm 2*

1997 *Civil War Generals 2*

1997 *Lords Of Magic*

DOWN BY THE RIVER NILE

It's not surprising, then, that the Nile plays a pivotal role in *Pharaoh*, forcing some difficult resource management decisions from the start. Settling a community on the banks of the river provides a fertile arable farming environment (which will supply two good harvests a year), but the benefits have to be weighed against the unpredictable and devastating floods which destroy crops and leave people starving. On the other hand, cultivating land away from the Nile has its own drawbacks because the soil is acidic and the irrigation system perfected by the

constructing these aesthetically pleasing monuments isn't wasted, though. Throw up a temple to the God Of War and you'll be supplied with troops to protect your borders (they'll happily build defensive walls and guard towers to protect your citizens); bestow a temple or two on the Sun God and the deity will ensure that the Nile holds its banks for another year (meaning that crops are assured and more time can be allocated to building work). Given gentle encouragement, you'll soon find your society spreading along the banks of the Nile and becoming reasonably self-sufficient, allowing

based combat is automated, but if the enemy brings the fight to your doorstep, you will be able to ram an invading ship with your galley, or mow down enemy soldiers with your chariot (*Ben Hur*-style), depending on the circumstances.

IT'S ALL NEW

Game mechanics aside, the graphics have improved dramatically and the pop-up information screens that had little narrative impact in the *Caesar* series have been replaced with dynamic animation at plot-critical points. The familiar point-and-click interface returns, but is now reduced to 5 per cent of the play area (that's the sort of groundbreaking attention to detail that *Caesar* fans expect, and it will no doubt be 'borrowed' by other developers). Impressions have added idiot-proof map and scenario editors (which will, no doubt, spawn a healthy Internet-led swapping community and extend the shelf life of the game), and they've included a city construction kit for those who simply want to build an idyllic paradise secluded from the real world. Obviously aware that this may all be slightly daunting for *Caesar* virgins, Impressions have improved the AI of your tactical adviser: instead of just telling you there's a problem, he'll now suggest a series of (often daunting) solutions (a bit like being married). The difficulty has been carefully crafted, so providing you finish and understand the tutorial missions, your city should run like clockwork. With work on *Pharaoh* continuing a lot faster than the actual ancient Egyptians built the pyramids, it's reassuring to note that

“Throw up a temple to the God Of War and you'll be supplied with troops. Bestow one on the Sun God and the deity will ensure the Nile holds its banks”

Romans remains years away from fruition. So unless you risk building by the river, water will need to be carried to and from your chosen settlement, and you'll have to spend valuable time perfecting your fishing and hunting skills to make up the deficiency in the food supply. That first quandary aside you'll soon find plenty of time for the Egyptians' favourite pastime – building.

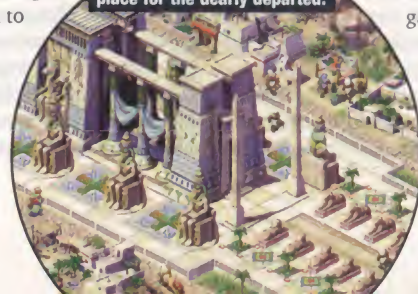
BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Bearing in mind that no-one knows how the Egyptians constructed their buildings, Impressions have taken a bit of artistic licence in allowing you to build temples, shrines and obelisks from the ground up, stone by solitary stone (it's a massive 'hands-on' improvement over the 'select this building and drop it there' simplicity of the *Caesar* titles). Seasoned gamers will relish the long-term challenge of building pyramids and Sphinxes, but they'll be handicapped by the lack of a willing workforce for such back-breaking work, meaning that heavy-handed persuasion may be required to coerce bricklayers and stonemasons. Time spent

time to tackle any one of 30 available scenarios. These 'task-specific' missions give you the opportunity to play on your strengths. If economic management appeals, you can preside over housing issues, organise civil and local government, monitor tax collection and maintain educational facilities. In time, fiscal emergencies will arise and some hard decisions may mean robbing Peteus to pay Paulus – after all, your lavish banqueting and entertainment budget (which includes in-house dancers and jugglers) comes before the need to run a decent health service.

If balancing the budget of a growing populace doesn't excite, or you're worried that the feedback from the natives isn't too encouraging, you'll no doubt warm to the newly included sea-based combat options, which allow the building of warships (equipped with deadly ramming gear) with which to protect your transport vessels. In general, both land and sea-

Almost as impressive as a Sphinx, and an ideal resting place for the dearly departed.



while the chronology of the series has gone backwards, the gameplay appears to be coming forwards in leaps and bounds. **PCW**



A thriving city at work. Notice the panel of hieroglyphics which act as action icons.



A well-developed community puts the finishing touches to a majestic Sphinx.



Down by the river. Note that fresh water supplies have been built.



Hieroglyphics act as control icons, but they're easy to decipher.



The in-game artwork is quite stunning.



You'll need to monitor the water levels to avoid flooding.

Most Egyptian architecture still defies modern-day explanation.



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

The Egyptians must have been workaholics. There's no other way to explain the presence of such enduring architecture today. Historians estimate that it would have taken around 25 years to construct a Sphinx, and it's fascinating watching the structures develop as the timeline unfolds. Given the human sacrifices involved in keeping the gods happy, the construction of these monuments demonstrates the importance the Egyptians placed on worship – a theme which dominates the game.



Building a Sphinx – only 20 more years to go.

Hungary for more?

IMPERIUM GALACTICA II: ALLIANCES

Richie Shoemaker goes to Budapest, home of Hungary's premier game developer, where he discovers a 3D real-time strategy game worth getting excited about

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Digital Reality
PUBLISHER GT Interactive
WEBSITE www.gtgames.com
OUT November 1999

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Combination of genres: 3D real-time strategy and in-depth empire building
- ★ Updated user-friendly interface
- ★ Three distinct races to choose from
- ★ Tons of high-quality FMV sequences

CV



DIGITAL REALITY

Hungary's finest have been at it for years

1994 We said of *Reunion*: "A mixture of *Privateer*, *Dune*, *Master Of Orion* and *Sim City*... This first offering from a group of Hungarian programmers bodes well for the future." (PCZ#13, 80%)

1997 *Imperium Galactica*: "Colony development similar to *Sim City*, space exploration like *Ascendancy*, space and land combat like *C&C*." (PCZ#53, 90%)

1999 Expect the *Imperium Galactica II* review to follow the same lines.



Just one of the many cut-scenes that litter the game.

S eated in a Budapest cinema that would make your local UCI look like an oversized video shop, I was among a horde of European game hacks, all there to see the sequel to 1997's *Imperium Galactica*. Considering the amount of video sequences in the game, a cinema was the perfect venue and, compared to the rest of the gaming world (bar Westwood), who now prefer 3D-accelerated cut-scenes, Digital Reality obviously like FMV. A lot.

"We have been gamers for a very long time," said Gabor Feher, head of Digital Reality, after the show. "We remember

that many games had some great animations – animations that you looked forward to seeing. You can tell a richer story using the old animation techniques. You can give more personality to the characters with facial details that 3D engine cut-scenes cannot handle – not at the moment, anyway. Don't get me wrong – I love 3D cut-scenes, I just thought our method was more appropriate for this kind of game."

Gabor isn't wrong. Sitting there, siphoning fizzy pop and scooping handfuls of popcorn, the FMV sequences were as impressive as any I'd seen. Whether they'd seem quite as dazzling on the small screen was another matter. Thankfully,

Q&A

GABOR FEHER

Not only is he the managing director of Digital Reality, but he also looks a bit like Harold out of Neighbours

PCZ What was the first game you ever played?

GABOR Asteroids. No, Pac-Man. I was in France at the time and I saw this beautiful machine on the corner of the street. I put some money in and lost within a minute. But I was bewitched from then on.

PCZ What is your favourite game of all time?

GABOR The game that sticks in my mind is *Doom*. It combined everything. It was frightening, you had to be skilled and the graphics and 3D engine were great. *Day Of The Tentacle* is another fantastic game.

PCZ What was the last game you bought?

GABOR Er, *Half-Life*. And a collection of the *Wizardry* series. I liked *Wizardry 6* and *7* a lot.

PCZ Have you ever been in a fight? If so, what happened?

GABOR It was a long time ago, at school, when the smallest person from our class had to fight the smallest person from another class. I was the smallest.

PCZ What? Like dwarf gladiators?

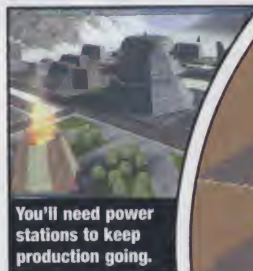
GABOR It wasn't a proper fight, but I won anyway.



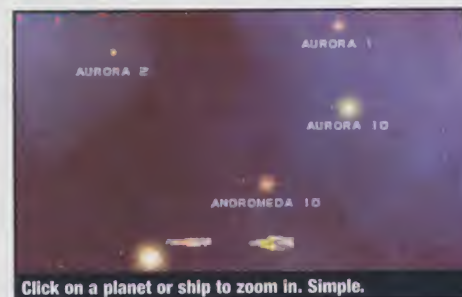
The space battles are the most attractive part of the game.



Design your weapon, armour and engine configurations for your ships and tanks.



You'll need power stations to keep production going.



Click on a planet or ship to zoom in. Simple.



If resource management isn't your thing, you can set it to automatic.



Keep your colonists happy and keep your enemies at bay.

Imperium Galactica II as a game looks just as good, and unlike the previous 2D attempt, sports a swanky new 3D engine that any strategy game would be proud of.

REACH FOR THE STARS

Like the original game, *Imperium Galactica II* is a blend of *Command & Conquer*, *SimCity* and *Master Of Orion*, only this time in full 360 degree spin-o-vision. To give you an idea, if you've read the *Homeworld* review (starting on page 72), imagine the same game but with full research trees, diplomacy, spying, sabotage and large-scale 3D combat not only in space, but down on planet surfaces as well.

Boasting three races to choose from and a campaign for each, the core of the game is mission-based. The Humans must find an ancient device that holds the secret of immortality. In contrast, the Kra'hen have more simple aims – galactic domination – and, being a hostile race, they are quite happy to kill first and ask questions later.

In between are the Shinari – devious, secretive and out for profit. If you choose to follow the campaigns through, you will be rewarded with hours of FMV (the game will come on

at least four CDs), as well as a number of random missions and branching storylines. Instead, you could choose a number of one-off scenarios, an eight-player multiplayer deathmatch or a massive, week-long epic taking in everything from the campaign, but without the movie bits.

THE 3D ISSUE

All this wouldn't work, however, without a decent interface, and after a brief playtest in a very small room full of eager Germans, the interface seems

game, leaving you to browse the battlefield, issue orders and devise strategies without getting in a panic.

I mentioned to Gabor that Westwood (*Tiberian Sun*), Cavedog (*Total Annihilation*) and Ensemble Studios (*Age Of Empires*) had all dismissed 3D strategy games as having poor interfaces, saying that the gameplay suffers as a result of having to 'play' the camera. He was almost insulted.

"I think we have got the 3D camera just right," insisted Gabor. "Many RTS

camera around, you can just use the pre-set views, like you have in football games such as *FIFA*. Top-down, third-person, three-quarter views – they're all there. We are giving people a choice. Whatever view you want, you can have."

Gabor added: "I play the game like I play any RTS game, by using the mouse to select my units and the cursor keys to scroll the map. It's the same with something like *Quake*. In fact, it's easier than *Quake*. It's pretty simple."

"I play the game like I play any RTS game, by using the mouse to select my units and the cursor keys to scroll the map. It's the same with something like Quake. In fact, it's easier than Quake. It's pretty simple"

DIGITAL REALITY MANAGING DIRECTOR GABOR FEHER

to be shaping up well. Gone are the squeezed together icons of *IG1* and instead *IG2* has a tree-like menu system transposed on to a spinning 3D orb. It's all very flash. More importantly, it is easy to use, making a breeze of browsing the starmap, researching technologies and designing spaceships. In combat, too, the interface poses no major problems, for the simple reason that a stab on the space bar pauses the

games don't have a pause feature where you can take time out to plan your attack. With the depth of *Imperium Galactica II*, you sometimes need to rethink your strategy or move the camera to get a better view. You don't have to move the camera for the sake of it – it's not a major part of the game, like many people think it should be. It's just a tool to help you play and see the results of your actions. If you don't want to spin the

LOOKING FORWARD

What is so impressive about *IG2* is the scale of the game. Zooming from the starmap straight to a view of a massive fleet or planetary base is surprisingly quick. But once you see two fleets engage in combat, or the tanks that you designed make quick work of an enemy colony, you finally get a sense that Digital Reality have merged each part of the game into a convincing whole. The explosions are right out of an action game, the units intricate and packed with detail. If the original game was revolutionary in theory, the sequel promises to put those ideas into practice. Maybe 3D and real-time strategy can go together after all.



Buff your helmets for EDGAR TORRENTERAS' EXTREME BIKER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Deibus Studios
PUBLISHER Havas Interactive
WEBSITE www.deibus.com
OUT October

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Debut game from Camden-based developer Deibus Studios
- Endorsed by Spanish motocross wunderkind, Edgar Torrenteras
- *Motocross Madness* gone mad, with some outrageous locations

You've probably never heard of him, but Spain's Edgar Torrenteras is currently the big noise in the adrenaline-fuelled world of motocross. He had his first motorbike at the tender age of three, and entered his first race at seven. He hasn't

Another job for our resident motocross expert, Steve Hill

looked back since and has picked up a slew of trophies in the process, including last year's inaugural Vans Big Air Festival in Paris. To top it all, he's now also got a game endorsement under his belt, courtesy of Havas Interactive. Not bad for a 19 year old.

Torrenteras' speciality is freestyle, a discipline which lies firmly in the realms of Extreme Sports, and rightly so. You might have thought you were pretty cool on your BMX, but this is a world away from pulling a wheelie in the school playground, and some of the stunts he performs are quite literally death-defying. He perfects them at his private track on the outskirts of Barcelona, and a recent media demonstration of his talents was met with whoops of amazement

and spontaneous applause, even from terminally cynical games chimp, despite the fact that at least one of them thought he was called Edmundo Tarantino. A man flying 30 feet into the air on a motorbike is certainly an impressive sight. Watching him hang off the back in a Superman pose is enough to make you question his

HE'S M-M-M-MAD SIR

As for the game, *Extreme Biker* encompasses traditional outdoor motocross, stadium-based supercross, long-distance baja racing and freestyle stunt action. Much like *Motocross Madness*. However, while the Microsoft classic stuck to more orthodox locations, *Extreme Biker*

“In the ultra-difficult El Cordobes, the rider keeps hold of the handlebars, flips both feet under him and thrusts his pelvis into the air as if his arse were on fire”

sanity. Essentially, it's like watching a real-life version of *Motocross Madness*, with the key difference being that if it all goes horribly wrong you can't just press 'Start' and resume proceedings as if nothing had happened.

will be far more stylised – the 25 environments encompassing dense forests, active volcanoes, and even the streets of London and Paris, not to mention the rooftops. There will also be a host of bizarre obstacles to



ET gets an update for the Pepsi Max generation.



Little fluffy clouds.



Lean into the bends for extra purchase.



"Look Dad, no hands!"



Not sure what's happened here, but it looks painful.



You'll believe a man can fly.

overcome, including Evel Knievel-style canyon and river jumps. You can even ride your bike along the top of an airship, something you certainly shouldn't try at home.

The stunts are equally outlandish, with all manner of gymnastics possible thanks to the game's unique Gyroscopic Air-Stunt Stabilisation system. Some of the tricks have been created by Edgar Torrenteras himself, including the ultra-difficult El Cordobes, whereby the rider keeps hold of the handlebars, flips both feet under them and thrusts his pelvis into the air as if his arse were on fire. Other stunts in the game have never been performed in real life, although Edgar was so impressed by one of them that he went out and successfully pulled it off.

RAGGY DOLLS

Being tossed around like a rag doll is always a high priority in bike games, and *Extreme Biker* shouldn't disappoint, thanks to so-called Dynamic Inverse Kinematic riders. We've absolutely no idea what that means either, but instead of animations the game engine calculates what would happen, something that usually involves limbs being bent at macabre angles. The bike and rider can be controlled separately, offering far greater freedom of movement, making it possible to rotate the bike through 360 degrees in all three axes. It can also be ridden parallel to the ground, enabling you to perform the old 'wall of death' circus trick.

We've had a bit of a dabble and *Extreme Biker* looks to be shaping up

nicely, with some of the landscapes looking particularly impressive. Microsoft have set a very high benchmark though and, with *Motocross Madness 2* on the way, along with EA's *Supercross 2000*, it's a competitive market. *Extreme Biker's* Executive Producer, Daniel Bobroff, is optimistic though, and reckons that "EA had better do a better job than what they were showing at E3. It was awful. *Motocross Madness 2* will be cool, I'm sure, but they now have a lot to live up to in my opinion because of *Extreme Biker*. With their deadline next Spring, this Christmas we want them to feel like we did when we first saw *Motocross Madness* at E3 last year. We were absolutely spewing."

The battle lines have been well and truly been drawn then, and you

Q&A

EDGAR TORRENTERAS



He's from Barcelona, and he can't speak a word of English. Fortunately, his interpreter can

PCZ How do you come up with new tricks?

EDGAR While I dream at night. I look up at the ceiling, or while I'm sleeping I think of how I could do a different figure and the next day I try it out until I make it perfect. It's not as if I go to bed and say to myself 'Now I'm going to dream about something'. It just happens, it comes out of me.

PCZ Do you get much female attention?

EDGAR I don't know. When you're famous it's par for the course that more women are after you. I won't deny I've been with many women – but from the moment that I decide I like her, it doesn't matter to me whether the woman in question is fat, small, stupid or intelligent.

PCZ What's the first video game you ever played?

EDGAR *Super Mario Bros.*

PCZ What's the best video game you've ever played?

EDGAR *Extreme Biker*. It's quite complicated and has different levels of difficulty and I really like the challenge of always improving yourself.

PCZ What's the last game you bought?

EDGAR *Moto Racer 2*.

PCZ Have you ever had a fight? if so, what happened?

EDGAR The fight happened when I took somebody's mobile phone and by pressing the wrong button I disconnected it. The guy didn't have his PIN code.

PCZ And that escalated into a fight?

EDGAR Yes. The guy wanted to hit me. Before he even managed to do so, I hit him – and the guy was on the floor.

can rest assured that *PC ZONE* will be awarding gold, silver and bronze medals accordingly. You lucky people. **PCZ**



DEIBUS STUDIOS

This new development house currently has a concise CV – but is one to keep an eye on

Edgar Torrenteras' *Extreme Biker* will be the first effort from start-up developer Deibus Studios, whose name is rather pretentiously taken from 15th century Church Latin, meaning "from the gods", a description somewhat at odds with their location in the maggot-ridden cesspit that is Camden Town, London.



One of the most beautiful afterburner effects we've ever seen.



A pilot taking off, yesterday.



I believe I can fly.
I believe I can touch the sky.



The virtual cockpit in full swing. Check out the fully operational 3D instruments.

This might sting a bit, it's...

F/A-18E SUPER HORNET

Keith Pullin once studied the basic principles of flight at school. He must know a thing or two about modern day military flight simulations then...

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Digital Integration
PUBLISHER Titus Software Ltd
WEBSITE www.superhornet.com
OUT Late 1999

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Fully interactive carrier deck with little men waving sticks and everything
- Based on the US navy's new classified F/A-18E Super Hornet
- Two war zones using actual satellite data
- Cool mouse-operated 3D virtual cockpit

CV



DIGITAL INTEGRATION

Founded in 1984 by Rod Swift and David Marshall, Digital Integration is one of the longest-surviving developers around. Their PC highlights include...

- 1995 Tornado.** Still one of the most involving and realistic sims ever.
- 1996 Apache Longbow.** One of the best helicopter sims on the PC.
- 1997 Hind.** Fly the highly acclaimed Russian answer to the Apache Longbow.
- 1998 F-16 Fighting Falcon.** Another ultra-realistic flight simulation.
- 1998 Rival Realms.** A break from tradition with a half-decent fantasy RTS.

Not content with simulating one of the most classified jets in the world (only a select few of the US Navy's Top Gun have ever flown the new 'Super Hornet'), veteran Surrey-based outfit Digital Integration have decided to create the world's first 'fully interactive' carrier deck for that final touch of authenticity. Planes constantly take off and land, burly seamen scamper across the deck waving large, glowing sticks, and exhaust smoke from jet engines drifts on to the ocean. You could say it's a whole new plane of sophistication. One thing's for sure – you know you're in a war.

You'd be forgiven for thinking this was a case of aesthetics without the avionics, but that's definitely not the case. *F/A-18E Super Hornet* features a tasty mouse-operated 3D virtual cockpit with an astonishing 115 active buttons and switches, autopilot modes, communication channels, radars, and other information that can be accessed with a simple click of your mouse button. You can still use the standard keyboard commands, of course, but as simulations become more and more complex, the ability to be able to perform any action you want without using the keyboard is a masterstroke of ergonomics. If you

have a decent flight stick or HOTAS (hands-on throttle and stick) support, you can kiss your keyboard goodbye.

VOODKA OR CURRY?

Super Hornet will let you get your teeth into two campaigns. The first is in the Barents Sea (based around Murmansk) where your task is to fly against a rebel communist faction of the Russian Federation. And the second, which takes place over the Indian Ocean, is a battle against the might of India who is attempting to make prawn vindaloo out of the Sri Lankans.

Whatever scenario you choose, it's going to be hard work. Along with 25 modern plane types (among them MiG 29s, Su 27s, Backfire Bombers and Mirage 2000s), 20 different ships and 30 ground-based vehicles are planned, including moving infantry and tank battalions.

The course of each campaign is determined by the success or failure of both forces in achieving their goals. In other words this is a real-time dynamic war – the outcome of each mission directly impacts the starting conditions for the next. Hence the detailed planning screens that can be turned on or off depending on your skill and/or current realism setting. Not only is it used to tweak your mission waypoints, and primary and

“No game has ever been as close to flying the real thing as *Super Hornet*”

PRODUCER ANTHONY REDFEARN

Q&A

ANTHONY REDFEARN



Super Hornet's producer and one-time judo expert speaks to PC ZONE

PCZ What was the first game you ever played?

ANTHONY That has to be Grandstand's *Astro Wars*.

PCZ What's the best game you ever played?

ANTHONY My favourite game has got to be *Half-life*. No, actually, can I change my mind? Make that *Xenon*... No, I've just thought of *Spy Hunter*...

PCZ Make your mind up...

ANTHONY Yep, definitely *Spy Hunter*.

PCZ What was the last game you bought?

ANTHONY Well, I didn't buy it exactly. I managed to blag a copy of *Kingpin* off the guys at Interplay in the States.

PCZ Have you ever been in a fight, and if so what happened?

ANTHONY Yes, at the age of seven – I used to kick arse at judo.

PCZ Does your mum play flight sims?

ANTHONY Of course she does, she even wears flying goggles to do the ironing!



Before you can embark on a campaign, you must prove yourself in training.

secondary targets, it's also a perfect opportunity to gauge the current strengths and weaknesses of both armies. You may be able to spot an advancing force on the map that has otherwise been overlooked and arrange a mission to intercept the threat. Basically, rather than relying on what the computer tells you to do, you're actively encouraged to show your own military tactical skills.

This pivotal section is also where you get to check mission details and flight paths of other pilots and your own wingmen. Due to the mouse-operated communications consoles, wingmen will apparently be more versatile and intelligent than ever.

In the version we played, our wingman certainly seemed to have a fair idea of what he was doing. He streaked off into the distance, harpooned an enemy destroyer, returned to the carrier and was back,

tucked up in his bunk, before you could say "Russian patrol ship". Maybe the 24-player network option will attract the kind of beer-swilling, dazed gung-ho wingmen we can more easily identify with...

IT'S COLD AND I'M FRIGHTENED

This is not just a fair-weather war. You'll have to contend with low, medium and high cloud, plus thunder and lightning, rain, snow, night and day... As *Super Hornet*'s producer Anthony Redfearn keeps saying: "No game has ever been as close to flying the real thing as *Super Hornet*."

Yeah right, that's what they all say. But he might actually have a point.

Of all the flight simulations we've recently clapped eyes on, *Super Hornet* does seem the most likely to scoop awards. Throughout the entire game you sense a relentless obsession with realism. From the colours of the

test plane to the exact weight and specifications of the numerous air-to-air, air-to-ground and air-to-ship weapons, nothing escapes the surgeon-like precision of the programmers.

But that's DI for you – remember, these are the wily old heads responsible for such quality flyers as *Apache Longbow*, *Hind* and *F-16 Fighting Falcon*.

But enough of that, you want to know about graphics, right? Well, take a look around the page – we can safely say there are no worries there. We've been reliably informed that the game cruises along blissfully at 1024x768 resolution and supports all 3D cards. At this stage the minimum specification is likely to be a P266 with 64Mb RAM.

Each 'world' has been modelled on real-world terrain data gathered by satellite and encompasses an

area in excess of 40,000 square miles. Dotted across this landscape is a plethora of active units such as radar installations, bunkers, etc. But also populating the landscape is a hefty collection of towns, villages, airfields, harbours and industrial complexes. All of these, like every other object in the game, will squeeze your processor to the limit with gratuitous use of dynamic lightning and light source shading. This is a live world in every sense of the word.

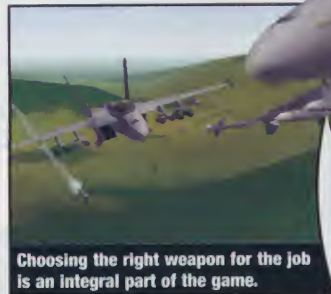
In any case, we can't wait to review it. Trouble is we'll have to – *Super Hornet* is not due out until the end of this year. Look out for an exclusive demo soon. [M]



The integration between air and ground forces is total.



Blue is friendly. Red is enemy. US orders: kill everyone, regardless.



Choosing the right weapon for the job is an integral part of the game.



The game revolves around this US Navy 'Super' carrier.



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Some hot crossbow action.



An airship going up in flames. Over Disneyland.



Fred West's playpen.



Somebody riding a dragon in the world of fantasy, yesterday.



God alone knows what this is.



Given the game's title, it's not surprising to see an airship.

FLYING HEROES

Those magnificent men in their flying machines... they go up diddly up up, they go down diddly own down.

Charlie Brooker hums a tune as he gets ready to take to the skies

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Illusion Softworks/Pterodon

PUBLISHER Take 2

WEBSITE www.illusionsoftworks.com

OUT Winter 99

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Dogfighting and air-bound fun – with silly ships
- Spangly 3D loveliness for your eyes
- Does not feature *Take My Breath Away* by Berlin

Oh come on. As if. What do they take us for? Cuh. The creators of *Flying Heroes* have the outright cheek to expect us to believe in a faraway fantasy world called Hesperie, where the favoured sport isn't football or snooker or drinking or hurling shoes into the faces of little children but *dogfighting*. And that's not dogfighting as in 'two rottweilers in a pit, chewing each other's faces off while a crowd of baying cockneys excitedly punch the air and each other', but as in 'two pilots flying about in the sky and trying to kill

one another, you know, like *Top Gun* and all that'.

Well, actually forget about *Top Gun* because we mentioned this was happening within a *fantasy* world, yeah? And in the realm of fantasy, a common or garden fighter jet looks as stupid and out of place as a mechanical hen in a costume drama. Therefore, *Flying Heroes* is stuffed to the brim with bizarre airships, giant lizards and dragons, massive birds, and – silliest of all – people using *magic* to fly through the air like Superman. Like, s'yeah, right.

“Flying Heroes is stuffed with bizarre airships, giant lizards and dragons, massive birds, and – silliest of all – people using *magic* to fly like Superman”

We're being picky, of course. To be honest, it sounds like quite a laugh – especially when you glance at the available 'fantasy arsenal'. Sod heat-seeking missiles, *Flying Heroes* provides dartguns, killer bees, and the wonderfully psychotic-sounding

'axe-hurler'. If you've ever wanted to re-enact scenes from *Dastardly & Muttley In Their Flying Machines*, this could be your best chance.

The game enables up to six 'flying heroes' to go fantasy-dogfight bonkers in special flight arenas spanning ten different environments, none of which is remotely similar to Doncaster (that's a good thing, by the way). Think volcanoes and weird floating islands instead.

Visually, it puts us here at *ZONE* in mind of a cross between *Magic Carpet* and Sega's *Panzer Dragoon* – but far

crisper than either. A dull simulation this most certainly isn't: instead we're anticipating intuitive arcade-simple controls and high-speed 3D action.

But that's not all. No no no. *Flying Heroes* also incorporates a managerial mode, wherein you have to juggle

FIRST ENCOUNTER

resources to keep your team (er, you have to manage a whole team, if that's alright with you) afloat both financially and competitively. Win a bunch of contests, for example, and you could spend the loot you've earned on flash new weapons, or carry out much-needed repairs. Or just bag yourself a new 'ship': there are 24 different (and out-of-this-world) kinds of aircraft available, each of which can be upgraded up to four times.

So that's *Flying Heroes* in a nutshell – dogfighting, Jim, but not as we know it. We'll tell you more when we get our mitts on a review copy. Until then, look at the pictures and stop picking your nose. [W]



Fog, rain, and more than a light breeze.



New weapons include the M4/shotgun combo, underwater weapons and time-fused grenades.



Higher resolutions will be welcome.



Some buildings are great for sniping.



Up close his face is like an upturned pizza.



New equipment includes laser sights, video surveillance cameras and tracer ammunition.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

DELTA FORCE 2

Q: What's the difference between *Richie Shoemaker* and a voxel?

A: One is underrated, the other obsolete and dog-pretty

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER NovaLogic
PUBLISHER NovaLogic
WEBSITE www.novalogic.com
OUT February 2000

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ New VoxelSpace engine promises less blocky visuals and a greater depth of view
- ★ You won't have to worry about having the right 3D card
- ★ Greater variety of missions, more weapons and new tactical options
- ★ Enhanced multiplayer game with Voice-Over-Net technology

Along with *Spec Ops* and *Rainbow Six*, *Delta Force* was among the first wave of 3D military shooters and a welcome addition to a blossoming genre. Out were plasma rifles and formulaic aliens, and in came camouflage, M-16s, and for once a foe we could enjoy putting bullets into – humans. Unlike its peers however, *Delta Force* didn't take the 3D-accelerated route to the front line; instead, developers NovaLogic decided

to stick to their tried-and-tested VoxelSpace technology. Everyone knows that voxels are blocky and ugly, so why in Sam Hell are they still using them for the sequel?

Like the film buff who went Betamax and the gamer who bought a Phillips CD-I convinced it was the future of 'interactive entertainment', NovaLogic's strained grip on its ageing VoxelSpace technology seems baffling. Or it does until you realise that in this age of shit-off-a-shovel 3D hardware acceleration, there is one thing the likes of Voodoo can't do, and that is deliver the blurry-eyed realism that the latest VoxelSpace engine can. The kind of realism that characterised the first *Delta Force* game, in fact – where you think you can just make out shapes moving through tall, swaying grass. *Quake III* may have ladylike curves, thousands of polygons and smooth metallic textures, but where's the grass? There isn't any of course, because it would look so flat you'd be able to see a cowpat at 100 yards. By comparison, *Delta Force's* landscapes look like a giant undulating, upturned

hairbrush – just the way the great outdoors should be.

Unfortunately, while *Delta Force* had a realistic look, the gameplay was less convincing. Missions were bland and could be completed in a few short days, the tactical elements were rudimentary and some of the animation was abominable. Unlike some sequels, *Delta Force 2* has some catching up to do, which it seems to be doing...

“Delta Force's landscapes look like a giant, undulating hairbrush – the way the great outdoors should be”

Delta Force 2 will sport 32-bit colour (as opposed to 8-bit in the previous game), and higher resolutions should also provide a less blocky landscape and a greater depth of view. The laws of physics have been implemented as well, with players having to compensate for wind and the forces of gravity.

Most importantly, the gameplay will be a lot more varied than before. Over 40 missions based across Africa, the Middle East, Russia and Antarctica

will be included, each offering a range of objectives – from search and destroy, to reconnaissance and rescue.

Perhaps the greatest enhancement for the sequel will be the Commander's Screen, where players plan their moves beforehand, much in the same way as in *Rainbow Six* and *Hidden & Dangerous*. This feature was sorely missed from the original game.

So far, so good then. The multiplayer game will be expanded to

include Voice-Over-Net technology and up to 50 players can shoot it out on each map. Unfortunately, unlike our American cousins who will get the game next month, we have quite a wait in store. Mirroring the events of last year, us Old Worlders will have to wait until next February, by which time demand will have reached such a feverish frenzy that people will be camping outside their games store. That's the theory, anyway. [M]

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the LEGO Rock Raiders.
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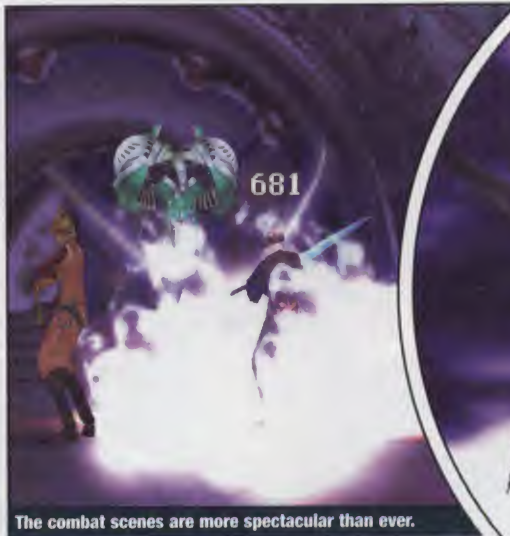
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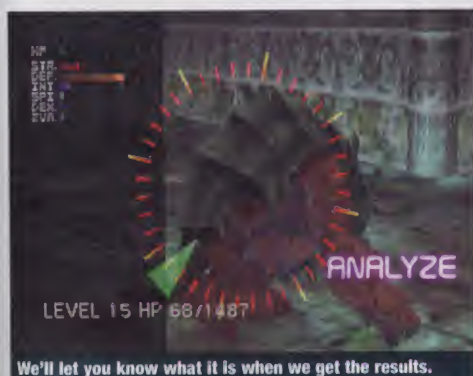
"Nobody likes me, everybody hates me... I think I'll go and eat worms..."



The combat scenes are more spectacular than ever.



Hey, didn't you used to be in *Battle Of The Planets*?



We'll let you know what it is when we get the results.



A tenner says it's Michael Aspel under that hat.



Rinoa
"Very pleased to meet you, Squall."

I spy with my little eye... some romantic interest.

FINAL FANTASY VIII

Final Fantasy VII was as cute as it was weird. Just like *Charlie Brooker*, in fact, who takes a look at the sequel

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Square
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
WEBSITE www.square.co.jp
OUT Winter '99

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Huge, masterly, accessible RPG of Japanese origin
- Sequel to the fabulous *FFVII*
- PlayStation version being kissed all over by critics

Ah, those Japanese. Never ones to let logic get in the way of a snappy title, they've long had a knack for coming up with strange yet instantly memorable game names. Arcade fish 'em up *Get Bass!* is a particularly piquant example, as are *Metal Gear Solid* and the notoriously misspelt *Donkey Kong*. Up against that lot, the name *Final Fantasy* seems downright normal... until you realise there's eight of the buggers. *Final Fantasy VIII*? The others in the series couldn't have been very 'final', could they? What are Square going to do when they genuinely do decide to bring the

FIRST ENCOUNTER

series to a close – bring out one called *Final Final Fantasy*? Eh? EH?

Anyway, none of that matters. What is important is this: the *Final Fantasy* games rock great big digital bells, and there's a new one on its way – the best one yet, by all accounts. Foreign imports of the PlayStation version of *Final Fantasy VIII* have been causing the cash registers in specialist gaming stores to slam open and shut like cupboard doors in an earthquake, and the Internet is awash with breathlessly positive fanboy reviews making heavy use of phrases like "life-changing", "kewl!", and "it rOx!!!". With the visually superior PC incarnation imminent, perhaps it's time you sat up and took notice.

If you're familiar with *FFVII*, the first thing you'll notice about *FFVIII* is the markedly different graphic style. We're a bit upset about this at ZONE; we *really* loved the cutesome super-deformed animé loveliness of *FFVII*, and the new, realistic cast of *FFVIII* looks a bit like a bunch of US high-school dweebs to us. But hey, perhaps it'll grow on us. Certainly the shots here are looking good.

The newfound realism is also reflected in the game's storyline,

arguments, there is romantic interest, there's the drama of approaching maturity. All a bit *Dawson's Creek*, in fact – at least until things start panning out and coming over all epic. How epic? Intergalactically so. This is a *big* game.

There are other changes – a streamlining of the magic and combat systems, greater integration of the foreground and background graphics (which tended to look a little disjointed in *FFVII*), and so on – but

“Rather than encompass a cast the size of the average *Muppet Show* audience, *Final Fantasy VIII*'s plot focuses on a small core of six main characters”

which by all accounts is a good deal more believable and mature than *FFVII*'s relentless shaggy-dog absurdity. Rather than encompass a cast the size of the average *Muppet Show* audience, *FFVIII*'s plot focuses on a small core of six main characters. The lead, Squall, begins the game as a student at a military academy, along with a bunch of his mates. There are

so what? The thing to anticipate is the sheer grace and scale of storytelling that awaits you.

Many have hailed the PSX version as a masterpiece: you'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll gasp, you'll scream – and if the Internet fanboys are to be believed, you'll come, too. *FFVIII* is anything but shallow. Look forward to it. That's an order. [X]



Hubert's Rothmans habit was starting to affect his track performance.



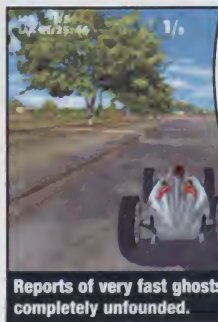
Antique enthusiasts on the way to a convention. Geeks.



Look at that, 44mph! That's what happens when you race in a bathtub.



Taking it to the max - hang on to your handlebar moustache!



Reports of very fast ghosts are completely unfounded.



More tea, vicar? I'll be mum.



Does 1930s prohibition mean no winner's champagne?

SPIRIT OF SPEED

Gentlemen, start your bathtubs. *Phil Wand* travels back to the simple but lethal world of 1930s motor racing

FIRST ENCOUNTER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Broadword Interactive Ltd.
PUBLISHER Hasbro
WEBSITE www.hasbro-interactive.com
OUT Late '99

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Some of the most evocative names in motorsport
- ★ Support for all 3D accelerator cards
- ★ Authentic 1930s feel
- ★ It's got the 24-litre Napier Railton in it

Tedious. That's the most fitting description of modern motor racing. After various safety bodies, pressure groups and regulatory associations have had their say, you've got grooves in your tyres, a plank on your sump, corks stuffed your inlet manifold

and chicanes halfway down the back straight. Put that lot together and you'll find yourself outpaced by the average funeral cortège. The way things are going, each 'race' car will soon be restricted to three wheels, 70mph and no driver. Spectators will be forced to watch the event from a neighbouring town and circuit surfaces will be painted with Savlon just in case anyone grazes their knee.

Back before the war, things were heaps different. It was perhaps the most adventurous, daring, exciting and plain *idiotic* era of motorsport. Teams and drivers were obsessed with lap times, so cars and tracks were built for speed - safety was of no concern whatsoever. Corners were raised and cambered so drivers could squeal round without lifting off the throttle. Brakes? Brakes were for sissies and losers. So was protective clothing - nobody wore a helmet or a fireproof vest. The only thing between you and the tarmac was a silk balaclava, despite the fact that silk is the very *last* material you would want on your face in the event of a blaze.

Names from the era paint a more romantic picture: Bugatti, Napier, Auto Union, Bentley, ERA and Mercedes. Twelve feature in *Spirit Of Speed*, Hasbro's upcoming simulation, with nine tracks across the world, ranging from Brooklands and Tripoli to the Roosevelt Raceway and Monza (now redesigned after too many fatalities).

“Multiplayer over a LAN lets you practise those four-wheel drifts with real opponents”

Each racer has its own handling characteristics, along with deadly quirks and foibles. The suspension set-up is unique to each car, and the physics model, able to accurately reproduce the feel of a 24,000cc iron bathtub, is supposedly as good as it gets. Collisions are shown with real crumples on your bodywork.

Broadword, the Aberystwyth-based developers, have taken every step possible to ensure total authenticity, from the hideous wooden dashboards to the *basso profundo* hullabaloo of the engines

and exhausts (any racing sim that makes the cars sound like real cars and not like mosquitoes certainly gets our vote).

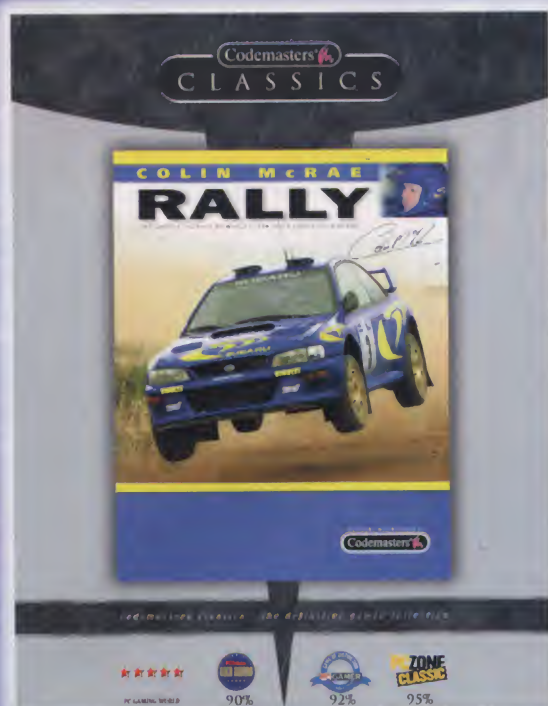
Winning a race won't involve planting your foot on the gas and holding it there all the way to the chequered flag. You'll need to keep a close eye on your gauges - oil, water and petrol - and get your pit timing

just right. You'll also need to know how to treat your tyres in order to get round in one piece.

The five different modes of play - Arcade, Practice, Single Race, and Championship Season 1937 - all help you get the most from the game, and multiplayer over a LAN lets you practise those four-wheel drifts with real opponents.

With a 1930s soundtrack and realistic newspaper scoops spinning on to the screen, the game should evoke all the right emotions (and for some, memories) of the period. **PCZ**

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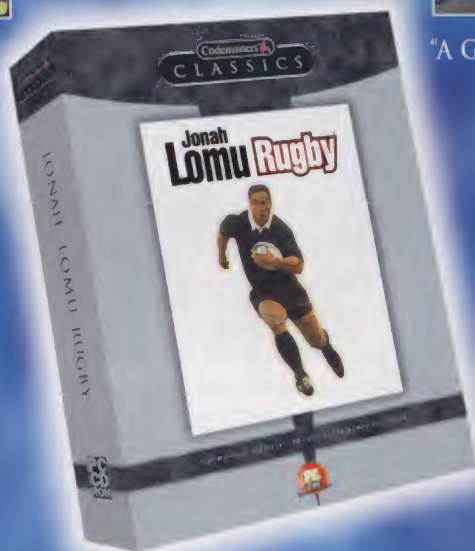


"A GREAT DRIVING EXPERIENCE, EXCELLENT REALISM - TOO DAMN GOOD"



PC Gaming World 5 out of 5

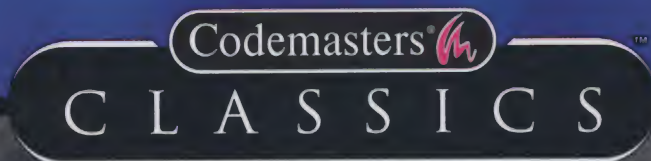
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WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

Once again **PC ZONE** hits the streets to find out what games you are playing in your spare time

WORDS Craig Vaughan and Heidi Wood PHOTOS Heidi Wood LOCATION Maidstone, Kent



STUART DAVIS
23, bar assistant

What's on your hard drive?

"Worms Armageddon, F1 Racing, Civilization: Call To Power, Wing Commander (which lasted half an hour), WWII Fighters and Star Wars: Supremacy. Basically everything but real-time strategy games, which I can't stand."

So you wouldn't call Star Wars Supremacy a real-time strategy game?

"I don't know – it looked a bit naff so I didn't open the box."

Fair play!



TOM PATERNOSTER
21, student

What's on your hard drive?

"Championship Manager 3, Kingpin, StarCraft, Outcast, Discworld Noir, Quake II, Hexen, FIFA Soccer 99, SiN, Populous 3, Tiger Woods 99 and V2000."

Blimey, you must be worth a fortune. Where did you get the money to buy all those games?

"I've recently acquired a CD writer and I just copied them off the Internet... What was this interview for?"



ROBERT FOSTER
24, teacher

What's on your hard drive?

"Tomb Raider III, Star Wars Racer, Settlers 2, South Park and South Park screensavers."

Right, so you like a bit of South Park?

"Yeah, but I don't let it take over my life. All I demand is that people RESPECT MY AUTHORITY! And I wish they'd stop killing Kenny. Surely Cartman or one of the others could have some grief instead?"



RAZA CREED
22, chemical engineer

What's on your hard drive?

"V Rally 2, Breakneck, Braveheart, TOCA 2, Half-life and SimCity 3000."

Do you spend a lot of time on the computer?

"Yeah, I'm on it every day, although my brother and I are trying to put together our own computer at the moment. We're trying to cross a Spectrum with a Commodore 64 – to get the best of both worlds."

That's something that might have worked – 15 years ago.



ANNA CRAYFORD
19, student

What's on your hard drive?

"Alpha Centauri, Apache Havoc, Carmageddon II, Duke Nukem, Resident Evil 2 and Kingpin. My boyfriend bought most of them."

You don't sound very happy about that.

"Spot on, every time he comes round to my house he wants to head straight for the bedroom for some action – but it's always with the computer and I'm getting a little tired of it. I want to play with his joystick, not watch him playing with himself."



HOLLY BROWN
20, telesales

What's on your hard drive?

"Grand Theft Auto, Tomb Raider II, Quake, Civilization II, Micro Machines 2, Links LS, Super Bomberman, MDK and Thunderhawk 2."

Don't you own anything a little more recent?

"Unfortunately not. I got hooked on the Internet recently so, as well as giving me a heart attack, my last phone bill has reduced my spending power somewhat."



CHRIS WILSON
25, music engineer

What's on your hard drive?

"Unreal, Monkey Island 3, Civilization II, Carmageddon II, The Golf Pro 2 and Star Wars: The Phantom Menace, but I'm keener on music programs like Dance EJ 2."

So do we have a potential Alex Reece in our midst?

"Let's hope so – if only for the money, not the fame."



PABLO SIVORI
29, surveyor

What's on your hard drive?

"Turok 2, Aliens Vs Predator, Commandos, Braveheart, Hidden & Dangerous, Rainbow Six, Populous 3, SiN and Half-Life. I tend to buy a lot of games, as most of them are far too easy. I completed Hidden & Dangerous in an afternoon on the hardest difficulty."

Hmm... we'll take that with a pinch of salt.



EMILY BLANCO
20, student

What's on your hard drive?

"Frogger, Shanghai Dynasty, Heretic, Asteroids... oh and three levels of Tomb Raider – they came free with the computer that I've just bought, but they didn't have any instructions. Can you offer any advice?"

Yes, go and buy some decent games, instead of all that retro nonsense.



MARIA HALL
25, clinical psychologist

What's on your hard drive?

"Mostly educational programs for my son. The last one he needed was for history, Civilization or something. It's such an outrage that they can charge so much for these programs. I had to pay £30 for Carmageddon, just because he likes the idea of driving things."

You must be very proud of all the time he puts into his course work.

"Well, he does spend quite a long time on the computer."

PCZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the **ZONE** reviews first

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call

Activision 01895 456 7000
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BMG Interactive 0171 973 0011
Core Design 01332 297797
Cryo 01926 315559
Crystal Dynamics/Ubisoft
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Eidos Interactive 0181 636 3000
Electronic Arts 01753 549442
Empire Interactive 0181 343 7337
Funsoft 01322 292513
Gremlin Interactive 0114 273 8601
GT Interactive 0171 258 3791
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MicroProse 01454 893893
Microsoft 0345 002000
Mindscape 01444 246333
NovaLogic 0171 405 1777
Ocean 0161 832 6633
Sierra 0118 920 9100
Sold Out 0171 721 8767
Take 2 Interactive 01753 854444
Teistar 01932 22232
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THE HALL OF SHAME

★ These are the games that we still haven't been sent for review. This means they're either completely crap and the publishers are scared we'll pan them, or their PR machine isn't quite up to full speed. This month's offenders (not that they ever take notice and send us stuff in, why do we bother?) are...

CARNIVORES Wizardworks
MARY KING'S RIDING STAR Midas
EXTREME G-2 Acclaim
TREASURE ISLAND Crystal
V-RALLY Infogrames

REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

We at **ZONE** pride ourselves on telling you exactly what we think. Our writers are the most experienced and talented reviewers in the business. They're all experts in their chosen genre and they won't pull any punches – if a game's not worth buying, we'll tell you why. But we don't leave it there. We also want to know what you think of the games that come out, which is why we've got our Feedback section on page 100. This is where you get the opportunity to get your point of view into **PC ZONE**. If you've got a comment to make, then we want to hear it.

ALL THE
LATEST
GAMES
REVIEWED
& RATED

DON'T BELIEVE THE JARGON

The standard spec machine these days is a P166 with 32Mb of memory – but before buying any game you need to make sure it will work on your system. Because the technical specs on packaging can sometimes be a little optimistic to say the least, make sure you check out the 'We say' bit in our tech specs box at the start of reviews. This is where we report on what we think the minimum tech specs should be. If a game runs like a tortoise on the machine listed by the publishers, then we'll tell you. All the games reviewed are tested on the minimum-spec PC as quoted on the packaging.

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

PCZONE CLASSIC 90-100% Here at **ZONE** we score every game out of 100. If a game receives a score of 90 or above, it is awarded the **PC ZONE** Classic award. These games are original, innovative, compelling and are worth buying even if you're not a fan of the genre.

PCZONE RECOMMENDED 80-89% If a game scores 80-89% it's awarded a **PC ZONE** Recommended award. Games that fall into this category are excellent examples of their type, and if you're a fan of the genre they're well worth buying.

70-79% Games that score in this region don't win any awards, but they're above average and well worth a look. If you're not a fan of the genre though, they will probably offer limited long-term appeal.

20-69% These games are below average and you should really only consider parting with your cash if you're a big fan of the series or genre or you see it at a reduced price.

PCZONE PANTS 0-19% Games that score under 20% should be avoided. They offer little in the way of long-term appeal, can be frustrating, and definitely aren't much fun. If a game is seriously bugged then it will also fall into this category. You have been warned.



72 HOMEWORLD



78 DRIVER



80 X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER



82 DRAKAN: ORDER OF THE FLAME



84 FLIGHT UNLIMITED III



86 GP500

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★ £34.99 • Sierra • Out now

Well, Sierra's new space extravaganza has certainly taken its time getting here.

Paul Presley counts off the days

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 with MMX **Memory** 32Mb RAM, 1Mb PCI video card **WE SAY** It chugged in software mode on a PII 300 with 64Mb RAM, so we recommend a 3D card of any sort and those specs as a minimum

PCZONE CLASSIC

The moment I knew I was totally hooked on *Homeworld* came when I found myself still in the PC ZONE office at 9.30 on a Friday night, wondering if I could talk a rapidly fading Richie into having another multiplayer game. This is what *Homeworld* is really all about. It's what gaming is really all about. Moments. Those moments when, just for an instant, you're suddenly hopelessly lost in the totality of the gaming experience. You forget everything that's going on around you and become completely swept up in the moment. *Homeworld* is full of them.

THOSE MOMENTS IN FULL

For instance: a battle between several dozen fighters is going badly for me. I'm on the run, using evasive manoeuvres to try to stay alive, but I have totally underestimated my opponent's firepower. All is lost. But then,

I'm grinning from ear to ear like an insane child. I'm totally lost in the moment.

A large battle is, for a change, going pretty well. I've already got the upper hand and suddenly my freshly built reinforcements arrive on the scene. This is too much for the enemy ships and they actually turn and run. The sight of them bugging out is enough to make me feel totally euphoric and I actually give a cheer. I'm totally lost in the moment. Incidentally, out of curiosity I send a scout to follow them. It turns out they've fled towards a couple of support frigates just out of my sensor range to repair, refuel and rearm. I honestly think it's the first time I've seen a computer AI actually work to preserve its forces in a strategy game. Very impressive.

Another battle has gone badly and there's just one of my fast-attack fighters left. I have no reinforcements anywhere near him and the enemy is just too great in numbers to escape. I switch the tactics to 'evasive' and watch helplessly as he begins to duck and weave erratically, trying to fend off the inevitable for as long as possible. He's really

“Homeworld is one of those games that wasn't born with a genre in mind on the desk of a management executive”

emerging out of the distance, I spot a couple of my heavy assault craft, slowly entering the field of battle like the proverbial cavalry. A complete feeling of relief sweeps over my whole body at the mere sight of them. I'm totally lost in the moment.

I've just built my first two ion cannon frigates and have sent them into a pitched battle against several enemy fighters, supported by a large assault vessel. I tell them to attack while the fighter escort takes care of the smaller ships and can almost hear the weapon systems powering up. A searing bolt of blue light screams from one of the frigates and slices into the assault ship. I can practically feel the impact.

putting up a brave fight, giving it his all, but finally succumbs and bites the dust. I feel genuinely sad and just a little bit proud of his noble effort. I'm totally lost in the moment.

I BET THE WUSS CRIED

There are plenty of other moments like this and I'm sure you'll have your own stories to tell when you play the game. And play it you should, because if you haven't already figured it out (or glanced at the score), *Homeworld* is a superb game.

It's hard to pin down to one particular category. Part resource management, part space combat sim, part wargame, *Homeworld* is one



Two big capital ships duke it out.



Although confusing at first, the vapour trails really help you determine the path of each battle.

HOM



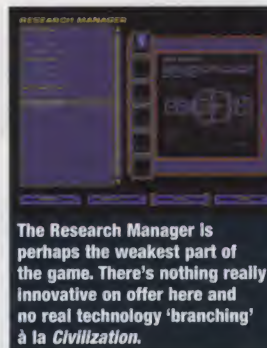
EWORLD



If your mothership goes, that's it. Game over. So make sure it's defended well.



The Build Manager is where you spend your resource units. Choose wisely as half of each battle is won or lost right here.



The Research Manager is perhaps the weakest part of the game. There's nothing really innovative on offer here and no real technology 'branching' à la Civilization.



Now these boys knew how to ROCK!!!

ADAGIO FOR LIGHTSHOWS

The musical side of *Homeworld* for once deserves as much attention as the graphics, but not necessarily for the right reasons

The story of lead designer Alex Garden's 'flash of inspiration' on hearing Samuel Barber's *Adagio For Strings* one morning has been well documented and it's a testament to his integrity that the stirring classical piece has remained in the game, not to be replaced by some thumping techno drum-hop trance beats for the 'now' generation.

Ironically, this dogged persistence might be the reason the music doesn't quite gel in the final game. It's not Mr Barber's fault. *Adagio* remains as stirring and hauntingly beautiful as ever, even more so when combined with the epic nature of the game's cinematic opening scenes. What jars is actually the rest of the music. Because we open with such a classical piece of audio perfection, the rest of the custom-made music can't help but fall behind. What's worse is that the style changes. Instead of remaining with the classical flavour, we are instead assaulted with a sort of sub-Jean Michel Jarre repertoire, circa his 'Industrial Arabic' period. In short, it gets old, quick.

But an even more bizarre musical tale revolves around – wait for it – Seventies lightshow pioneers Yes. It seems the boys from Relic and the ageing beardos came together and *Homeworld's* themes and style so inspired lead vocalist Jon Anderson that he wrote a song based on it. To quote the man himself: "The game is very similar to thoughts that are common to human beings. We're all trying to find our way home."

The song is to be included on their new album *The Ladder* – out now, pop-pickers. Personally, we've not rated Yes since the seminal (and cruelly misunderstood) *Arriving UFO* came out in 1972. You know, sometimes you miss the level-headed sensibilities of Rick Wakeman. And I never thought I'd see myself typing *those* words.



Co-ordinate your attacks in the hope of a successful gambit.

← of those games that wasn't born with a genre in mind on the desk of a management executive with degrees in Market Trend Spotting and Bandwagon Jumping. This started with a single vision and grew from there, encompassing whatever gaming genres it happened to pass on the way.

The storyline is straightforward enough and actually provides the gameplay with its shape. An ancient race has discovered a map buried in a ruin beneath a desert that points the way to their species' original home planet. An expedition is mounted, a new class of giant spacecraft is constructed and undergoes a series of hyperspace trial runs. However, while the ship is away from the planet, a hostile force invades and destroys everything. You have no choice left but to

seek out this fabled 'homeworld' and rebuild your civilisation, all the while pursued by the mysterious hostile force.

BY YOUR COMMAND

The real beauty is that Relic have not only managed to portray all this in stunning visual quality but have also made a user interface that allows you the freedom to play out any military tactic you can think of, issue just about any

"Homeworld is about letting you work out how to be victorious in battle, not about how to 'solve' a computer game"

type of command you want, yet remain practically invisible on the screen and be instinctive enough to grasp it within about ten minutes of play. It's a stunning

Formations are all-important in combat. Here we see 'The Claw' being used to good effect.



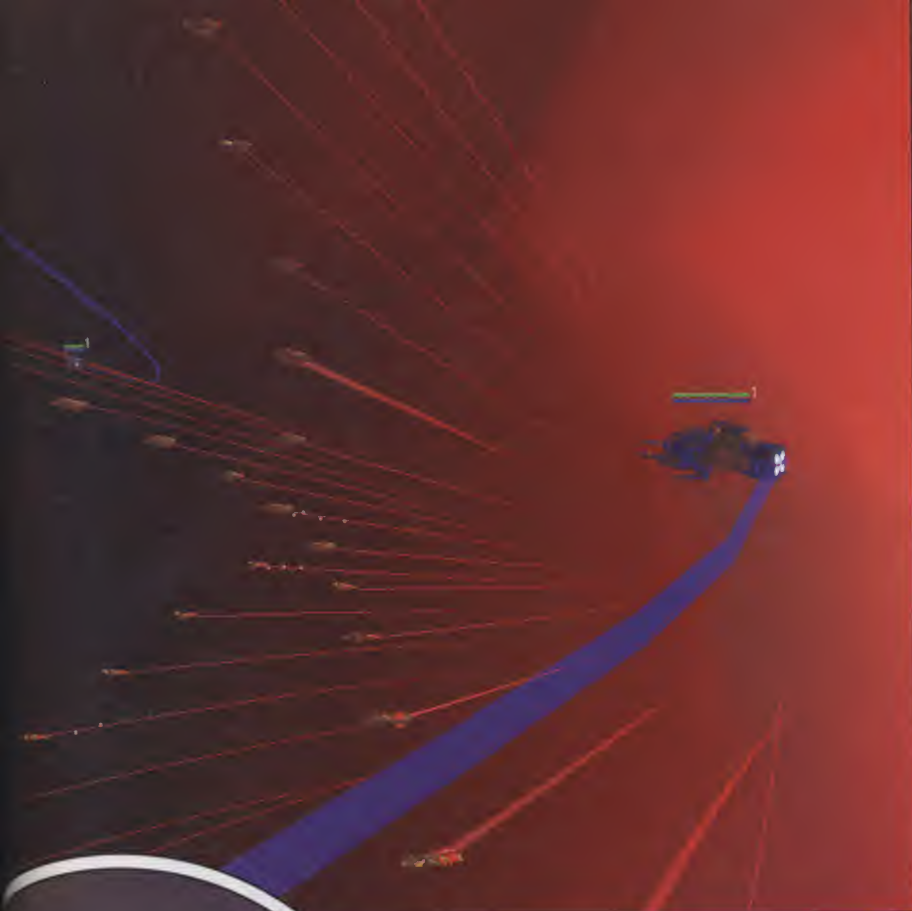
The spermatozoic nature of some of the scenes haven't been lost on us.

achievement. No menus to sort through, just a game to play (well there is one menu, but all the commands have simple hotkeys).

Your task throughout is as straightforward as the story. Use your mothership to manufacture units, mine asteroid fields and dust clouds for vital resource materials, build up a steadily advancing fleet while researching new technologies and fulfilling the objectives of

each particular mission. And fight the enemy. A lot.

This, above all else, is where *Homeworld* proves itself in the world of strategy combat games.



Communication with your mothership and fleet controllers keeps you abreast of events and provides you with your mission objectives.



Attacking the enemy mothership is futile unless you have a lot of guns.

With most titles that fall into this vaguely defined category, there's usually a 'golden route'. Take *Birth Of The Federation*, for instance. As soon as you'd figured out the best way to develop each new colony and built a big enough fleet, the whole game became a process of repeating the same formula over and over until you won. You tend to find that most strategy games, once you've figured out the optimum path to take, become little more than exercises in repetition.

But *Homeworld* has somehow managed to free itself – and the genre – from this scenario. The balance of unit types available, combined with the way they interact, the alarmingly impressive tactical mind of the computer AI and the openness of the whole game means there is never a golden route that



“THERE ARE THOSE WHO BELIEVE...”

Cheesy sci-fi hokum, Mormon teachings turned into light entertainment and a constant source of pay cheques for Dirk Benedict. It inspired *Homeworld*, too...

You look at *Homeworld* and can't help playing 'spot the sci-fi influences'. The zippy little fighters attacking big capital ships say *Star Wars*, naturally. The mix of gun turrets and ion beam 'cutting' weapons (plus the overly CGI visual style and large-scale battle scenes) practically scream *Babylon 5*. But the biggest parallel is the mid-eighties, Glen A Larson extravaganza that was *Battlestar Galactica*.

Relic's Alex Garden makes no bones of the fact that he's a huge fan of the show and would dearly have loved to make the officially licensed *Galactica* game. Take *Homeworld's* storyline: the last survivors of an entire race setting off across the galaxy in whatever ships remain, pursued by a malevolent alien race hell-bent on their destruction, searching for their fabled home planet. Throw in Richard Hatch and you've got yourself a TV show Sparky. But sadly, the licence was not to be, so a thinly-disguised tribute to what we're left with.

I'VE GOT MY ION YOU

If there's one thing we like, it's a *big* gun...



DEFENDER

It may be slow, but this thing is the Tony Adams of *Homeworld*. It stands there in the heart of your defence and, should anything come near it, just dives in feet first and obliterates the enemy.



CLOAKED FIGHTER

No strategy game would be complete without a 'sneaky bastard' unit and *Homeworld's* is the Cloaked Fighter. Does exactly what it says on the tin.

There's also a Cloak Generator unit available further down the line that can hide multiple ships in its energy field.



MULTI-GUN CORVETTE

Like the many arms of Vishnu, no less than six fully articulated gun turrets adorn this baby. It can take on an entire squadron

of fighters by itself, making it an ideal first-strike craft.



ION CANNON FRIGATE

When mere projectile weapons aren't enough, you want an ion cannon on the scene. Useless against fast-moving fighters,

the devastating ion beam is used to slice through an enemy capital ship's armour. Think of the Death Star's weapon and you'll know what I mean.



HEAVY CRUISER

As *Homeworld's* manual puts it: "When a Heavy Cruiser shows up, things get really quiet, really fast." This thing has FOUR ion cannons and six regular gun

turrets, each one the size of an entire corvette.

However, there are those who believe the only true way to enjoy *Homeworld* is to turn off all the game's music options, get hold of the CD soundtrack to the TV series and have it playing in the background when you start. And do you know, you can just about convince yourself (yes, I've tried it). All together now: "Fleeing from the Cylon tyranny, the last Battlestar, Galactica, leads a ragtag, fugitive fleet, on a lonely quest – for a shining planet known as... Earth." (Ooh, what a giveaway.)

Perhaps they should call the A-Team?





It feels like being in command of any giant space battle you've ever seen in a film or television sci-fi show

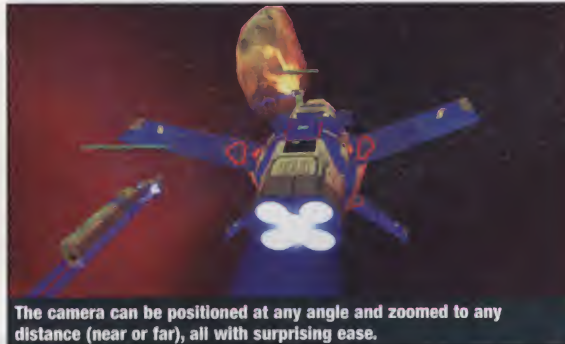
Support ships provide much needed repair and refuelling facilities for strike craft on long-range sorties.

If all else fails, you can even issue a 'kamikaze' order to individual units. Do or die, son. Do or die.

The training sections are well presented and easy to follow.



Can anyone make head or tail of this?



The camera can be positioned at any angle and zoomed to any distance (near or far), all with surprising ease.



Mining asteroids and dust fields is essential for survival. Resource collectors are therefore among the most precious of your units.

SON, I'M GONNA MAKE YOU A STAR... AND A GAS CLOUD

Homeworld comes with its own mission editor, but then doesn't everything?

Admittedly, with a game set in the vast emptiness of space, you don't immediately think there'll be very much use for a mission editor. But there's a deceptive amount of variety available to you in the MissionMan program that comes with the full game. This is mainly down to the game's open-ended strategy aspect.

Unlike the level editors of *Unreal*, *Half-Life* and the rest, where you're essentially creating mazes with set obstacles to overcome, here you're concerned with the distribution of starting units, the amount, size and locations of resources and how different players will make use of them. It's actually bordering on hardcore wargame territory, but since it looks so nice we'll let that pass.

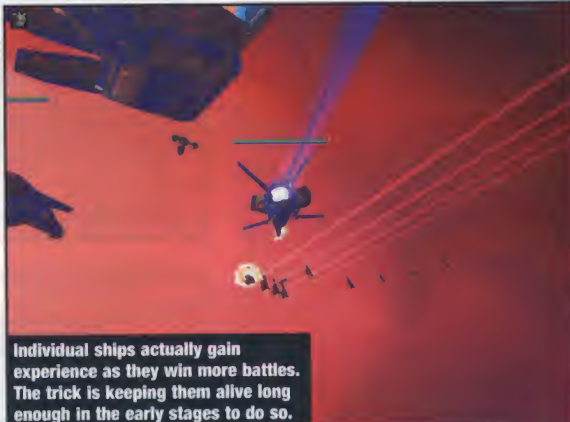
The only downside to MissionMan is that it looks so hideously complex to use and comes with such a spartan manual that you tend to approach it with extreme caution.



You find yourself constantly pursued throughout the game, both by raiders and other alien races.



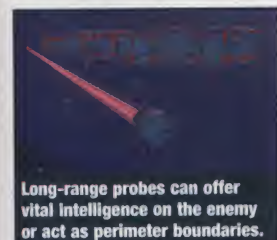
The intro sequence and mid-game FMVs actually use the pre-production artwork. Oddly enough, it works really well.



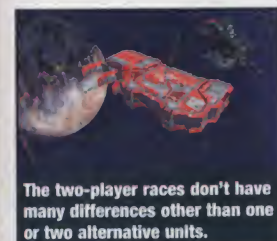
Individual ships actually gain experience as they win more battles. The trick is keeping them alive long enough in the early stages to do so.



The game occasionally breaks into automated sequences to further the storyline.



Long-range probes can offer vital intelligence on the enemy or act as perimeter boundaries.



The two-player races don't have many differences other than one or two alternative units.



The Sensors Manager is where you can get an overall view of proceedings and plot out long-distance journeys.

← ensures victory. You find yourself formulating military strategies as you take a break to go for a slash. It feels like being in command of any giant space battle you've ever seen in a film or sci-fi television show. *Homeworld* is about letting you work out how to be victorious in battle, not about how to 'solve' a computer game. And when a plan works, oh man, it feels good.

NIT-PICKING CORNER

Are there faults? A couple, although they're not so much faults as areas that could have worked better. The most notable is the inability to issue orders while the game is paused. There are times when things are so hectic that you need to pause it, take stock of the situation and be able to issue the odd command or two. It's a personal thing but it would have been a nice option.

ALSO CONSIDER

IMPERIUM GALACTICA (GT

Interactive, £9.99) A sort of catch-all strategy title comprising C&C ground combat, *Masters Of Orion* resource management and *Birth Of The Federation* space colonisation. All it lacked was a decent space combat section, which the imminent sequel will address. A cheap alternative to *Homeworld*.

PCZ #64, 77%

STAR TREK: STARFLEET COMMAND

(Virgin Interactive, £34.99) Similar sort of space combat meets strategy, but nowhere near as deep, engaging or fun as *Homeworld*. About the only thing it has going for it is the licence. PCZ #81, 83%

COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN

SUN (Electronic Arts, £34.99) The big-name strategy title of the summer, which is a shame because *Homeworld* is better. A lot better. And a lot more original to boot.

PCZ #81, 90%

The main disappointment is the research section. Although it does an adequate job, there's nothing really innovative about it and it's little more than a way to ration out the introduction of each new unit type. This is a shame, because every other part of the game shows so much originality of thought and innovative design that this just seems kind of tacked on – only there because it's expected.

MIDNIGHT ON THE FIRING LINE

But this is all petty stuff.

Homeworld does such a good job of sucking you in, making you feel at home and letting you enjoy the actual game that any criticisms are so minor as to not matter. What it does, it does superbly. The storyline is so well integrated into the game that you'll keep coming back, and for once the multiplayer 'deathmatch' mode is more than just a gratuitous option. Once again, the freedom allowed to the player means every battle feels fresh and the enemy's AI constantly surprises you with new twists.

Homeworld's biggest asset is, as I said at the start, its ability to lose you completely in its universe and make you relish each memorable gaming moment. Isn't that what you really want from your games these days? [X]

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Thoroughly absorbing gameplay • Visually stunning • Incredibly fluid and easy to control

DOWNERS Standard research section • Doesn't have the official *Battlestar Galactica* licence • Hard to find criticisms for a balanced review

94 The most rewarding game you'll play this year. Simple as that

LOST ON THE WAY

Homeworld was originally due out in March. What the hell kept it?

Sometimes, as a journalist, your instincts kick in when you see an early project. A hunch tells you when something is going to be big. That was how I felt when I was first shown the game in September 1998. The odd thing is that what I remember of the game back then doesn't look a hell of a lot different to what I'm playing now.

Last December, I was sitting in Relic's Vancouver offices, enjoying an

after-hours game of multiplayer *Half-Life*, and musing on how the game I'd spent the day being shown around still looked fabulous and still played superbly, but didn't actually appear to be any different. I'm sure they must have been working on *something* in all that time. Probably the AI. Developers are always 'working on the AI'. I dropped the matter and went back to being killed by Relic's lead artist.

Now we're in October (or at least we will be by the time you read this) and still nothing, on the face of things, seems to be any different. Even more intriguingly, the game has been held back several times – not just from its initial release date of March 1999, but also about three times in the past two months. So what is going on?

The official answer, which is probably truthful enough, is that it's

been undergoing constant bug-testing and game balancing. The same thing happened to Blizzard's *StarCraft*, after all. Certainly a game with such an open-ended, non-linear and highly strategic nature would require extensive testing before it goes 'gold' (as we say in the games business). Plus – take it from personal experience – Relic's Alex Garden is a real perfectionist.



A lot of cops in one big block.



People run for cover as we take to the pavement.



As a police car reverses into us, a pedestrian leaps for safety.



A mad chase down a steep San Francisco street.



Running a red light is a serious offence around here.



The Survival variation involves dodging the cops.

DRIVER

★ £29.99 • GT Interactive • Out now

The Seventies were crap. Phil Wand gets behind the wheel for a revisit

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 32Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** All major sound cards and 3D cards **WE SAY** PII 266 and a TNT2 or Voodoo3

PCZONE
RECOMMENDED

ALSO CONSIDER

NEED FOR SPEED: ROAD CHALLENGE (Electronic Arts, £39.99) A big departure from the original *NFS* concept, but still manages to cut the mustard.

PCZ #80, 83%

CARMAGEDDON II (SCI, £15.99) If the idea of invulnerable *Driver* pedestrians fills you with boredom, try the still-so-nutty *Carmageddon* series instead.

PCZ #69, 95%

GRAND THEFT AUTO (DMA/BMG, £15.99) Lame graphics meet dazzling gameplay and thumping phat beats for a sick trip to unlawful city.

PCZ #58, 92%

S kinheads. Mopeds. Punk. Rock. CB Radio. Dungarees – symbols of the Seventies that pale alongside the greatest icons of all: Starsky, Hutch, Huggy Bear and a red Ford Gran Torino with a white stripe across the roof. *Driver* successfully recreates that retro cop show feel with big cars, big hair and Seventies grooves.

You play the part of Tanner, an undercover cop whose job it is to infiltrate a nationwide crime ring by posing as a hired driver. Bank jobs, cover-ups, trips down to the local Kwik-E-Mart – you name it, you do it, all at breakneck pace and with absolutely no regard for traffic regulations or road safety. This may sound like a hoot, but what it actually means is that you're constantly up against the local constabulary. Them cops don't like you

bumping up the kerb and scattering pedestrians while you take a shortcut over the central reservation. They don't want to find you careering across an intersection before slewing the wrong way up a busy freeway. And they absolutely *hate* it when you go picking up bank robbers from outside banks and then cart them across town to locations unknown.

This makes your life rather difficult. At almost every turn, there's a patrol car with a Roscoe

“Come careering round a corner too fast and your hubcaps go on a journey. It's all rather engaging”

P Coltrane behind the wheel waiting – no, *yearning* – to flick on the sirens, leap on the gas and head off in your direction with howling tyres and a manic grin on his face.

And they're tenacious buggers to a man.

Like *Need For Speed* and *Midtown Madness*, they'll unthinkingly make daredevil lunges across several lines of traffic, two kerbs, a hotdog stand and three of its customers in a desperate effort to run you off the street. Jump a red and you'll be whammed into the nearest lamppost before you've put 50 yards between you and the lights. Going the other way? No matter, they'll swerve into your lane and nut you head on. *Wallop!* Furthermore, they seem to have X-ray vision and are hugely difficult to shake once on your tail. This gives the whole law enforcement side of the game a slightly unhinged feel, which in turn eats away at the realism.

HOT IN THE CITY

Your 'home' comprises the four cities of New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Miami. Each location is typically American, with arrow-straight boulevards

intersected at right angles by other arrow-straight boulevards. Because of this approach to town planning, it's impossible to get your bearings without continually looking at the mini map. Often you find yourself squinting at it for

missions, just like you used to when trying to get out of a labyrinth in *Doom*.

The cars are all long, barge-like sedans with the occasional Dodge van to break things up. Unlike *Midtown Madness* or *Grand Theft Auto*, there are no trucks, fire engines, ambulances, Volkswagens, school buses or other assorted vehicles that you normally see tooling around a city. Okay, so there *are* landmarks and neat features that help inject some life, such as the steep hills of San Francisco or the Fort Lauderdale area of Miami, but in general it feels like an antiseptic version of the real thing. *Midtown Madness* has a fair advantage in this respect.

DRIVER BY NAME

As for the way the game plays, *Driver* is as good as any other. A very obvious 'plus' is that the cars sound real – Seventies America rumbled to the sound of the V8 – and developers Reflections (they of *Destruction Derby* fame) have managed to capture the magical thrum of a big block engine. This is a notable first for PC gaming, and one which makes that subwoofer purchase seem all the more worthwhile.

Car control comes as second nature. Features such as the burnout button and handbrake make progress quick and easy. Although the range of cars at your disposal is limited to monstrous saloons with blancmange suspension, cross-ply tyres and the drag co-efficient of a filing cabinet, right and left-handers are dispatched with such poise and style that audiences will applaud



in awe. That is, until they have a go themselves and find they can pull exactly the same stunts. So as a driving game, it's instantly appealing and immensely satisfying.

Despite the fact that a successful mission means not crashing, *Driver's* main attraction lies in its real-world physics and damage model. In other words, most people will hit the gas and head for the nearest accident before they've even asked where the brakes are. Wham into a wall and your headlights smash; get thumped up the rear and your taillights blink out. Hoods crumple, tailgates mangle and side panels dent most convincingly. Come careering round a corner too fast and your hubcaps go on a journey. It's all rather engaging.

You can also save and edit your best and worst moments using the film director. With insane *Smokey And The Bandit*-style roadblocks and incessantly belligerent police, you can cobble together some good footage. The only downside is that it takes a huge amount of patience and a lot of time – quick replay is often your easiest option, where the computer guesses the best camera angles for you.

WHAT, NO NETWORK?

Despite a healthy number of single-player variations – Pursuit, Getaway, Cross Town Checkpoint, Trail Blazer, Survival, Dirt Track and Carnage – and a total of over 40 missions, the game has no multiplayer feature. This is, of course, a serious crimp on its longevity. If you've played *Grand Theft Auto*, *Need For Speed* or *Midtown Madness*, all of which

offer head-to-head lawbreaking, you'll know exactly what we mean. You might also begin to wonder what's so special about *Driver*, considering it's really just an amalgamation of all three.

And that's where the doubts set in. Play a few missions and they soon become a little too linear and repetitive. Set out to create havoc and you'll be surprised at just how little havoc there is to create – and how quickly your car ends up wrecked. In terms of *Carmageddon*-style mayhem, *Driver* ranks low on the fun scale. *Grand Theft Auto* is more villainous, *Need for Speed* plays a better game of cops 'n' robbers, and the graphics of *Midtown Madness* put it to shame. It's recommended for the handling alone, but only serious petrolheads need apply. **[C]**

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS** Great to drive • Fun to slide
• Honking great V8 sounds • Spot-on Seventies flavour • 44 missions
• 30 miles of road and over 150,000 buildings per city
- DOWNERS** No multiplayer • No multiplayer • Tenacious cops spoil the fun • Cities and traffic rather bland
• Graphical 'pop-up' very distracting

83 *Grand Theft Auto through a Midtown Madness windshield*



1 Damage Indicator

How close your car is to the great scrapheap in the sky.

2 Time

Counts up or down, depending on the mission or game variation.

3 Best time

Shows your best time (not used

for mission-based play).

4 Hood

Your folded bonnet, with two cops busy folding it some more.

5 Information

Obvious statement of the day.

6 Mini map

Bird's-eye view of the entire city.

Another psycho cop broadsides across both carriageways.



A quick heave on the handbrake and I've outsmarted Officer Barbrady here.

PROVING YOUR WORTH

Taking a cue from *Gran Turismo* on the PlayStation, *Driver* asks that you prove your worth before letting you out on unsuspecting streets. You have to run through a set piece of lunatic manoeuvres, including a burnout, handbrake turn, brake test, speed test, lap test, 180 and 360-degree spin, a reverse 180 and a slalom. All in a dark underground car park. In less than 60 seconds.



BURNOUT

As soon as the session starts, hit the burnout button.



HANDBRAKE TURN

Dab the handbrake to slide round to the left. Keep the pedal to the metal.



LAP

Hoon it back round to where you started and you'll get the lap.



360 SPIN

When the lap marker appears, steer left and hit the burnout.



TOP SPEED

If you were quick, you'll get speed. Now head down the central lane.



BRAKE TEST

Jump on the anchors before the wall. Now knock it into reverse.



REVERSE 180

With the engine straining, fling the car left and then hit forward gear.



180 DEGREES

Halfway down the middle, yank the car right and tug on the handbrake.



SLALOM

Weave in and out of the pillars, then loop back on yourself at the end.

X — BEYOND THE FRONTIER

★ £29.99 • THQ • Out now

Tearfully trading in his Cobra Mk III for an X-Prototype, Richie Shoemaker takes a spin beyond *Elite*

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** Direct3D-compatible 3D accelerator **WE SAY** Surprisingly attractive on a bog-standard 3Dfx card, but low-end users will experience slow-down in highly populated areas

PCZONE CLASSIC

The thing with online games like *EverQuest* and *Ultima Online* is that apart from the human interaction, you become part of a world where if you log off at any point, it carries on regardless. Essentially, you feel like you're missing out if you're not there — hence the reason our editor, Chris, has a phone bill the size of Nebraska. Maybe someone should have told him about *X — Beyond The Frontier*.

You may not think *Ultima Online* or *X* have much in common, one being an online fantasy RPG, the other a single-player space combat game, but both immerse you to much the same degree and in strikingly similar ways. You see, *X-BTF* is, in a sense, an RPG in space. Instead of building up skills and buying

poleaxes, you build up your ship with better engines, strange time compression devices and more lethal lasers. And just like *Ultima Online*, whenever you leave the *X* universe, you get the feeling that you're missing out, as if you not being there means some computer-controlled player will build a solar power plant or weapons forge right where you wanted to. Quite how it does this is difficult to explain, but shamelessly efficient German developers Egosoft seem to have arranged all their 1s and 0s in almost all the right places.

TRANSPORTING

After a wonderfully atmospheric introduction that seems to go on for hours (even the credits are worth a watch), you start the game at the helm of the *X-Prototype*, an *X*-perimental and no doubt *X*-pensive spacecraft that's been developed to take mankind to the stars. Unfortunately, as with all computer game prototypes, something goes wrong and you

are propelled into a distant galaxy from which you must find your way home.

Found drifting in Teladi space by a passing cruiser, you are given the most basic of information, a much-needed MOT and a loan of 100 credits. From then on, the game follows the legendary *Elite* formula of trading and fighting to build up your bank balance. Unlike *Elite*, however, instead of having hundreds of systems selling the same commodities, each race produces a number of specific products, many of which are unobtainable (and sometimes illegal) in other systems. Later on, when you have about 30 grand, you can even build factories of your own —

“Each race produces specific products, many of which are unobtainable (and sometimes illegal) in other systems. Later, you can even build factories of your own”

perhaps an illicit Bliss Place, procure a few defence fighters to look after them and indulge in some exploring, piracy or bounty hunting while the credits roll in.

MOSTLY HARMLESS

From the outset, the game is a voyage of discovery, thanks to the fact that the manual gives nothing away. There are no histories of the six discordant races, no maps of the systems — just a few technical details of some of the ship-early-available upgrades. While this lack of information ensures a wealth of surprises, it also guarantees an unhealthy dose of frustration as you try to work out which goods are best to trade, where and how to build factories, and which aliens to befriend.

It's this frustration that is *X*'s biggest failing. There is certainly a lack of dialogue between yourself and the various ships. Almost all of it is story-driven and of little use while you struggle to get to grips with the economics of finding profitable trade routes and setting prices at which your transport ships should buy raw materials. It literally takes about 20 hours of gameplay before you can really get stuck into the story and start exploring. Until then, your ship is hopelessly out-gunned and, as you can only save in trading stations (there's one at the centre of each system), you can easily fall prey to the pirates who hang out at the jump gates.

If you prefer the lightning pace and linearity of games like *Wing Commander*, you'd be better served by *Freespace* or its imminent sequel. If, however — like me — you consider *Elite* to be the best game ever made, *X — Beyond The Frontier* is by far its closest relation. You just have to stick with it. If you do, you'll be rewarded by some novel upgrades, an involving story and some impressive pitched battles. Some may berate the fact that there is only one ship to fly and no swooping over planets, but with the wealth of trading possibilities, such features are hardly missed.

RIGHT ON COMMANDER

Graphically, *X* is perfectly balanced. The ships are well designed and yet simple enough to be PC friendly in large numbers. Neon signs adorn factories and space stations and distant nebulas cast their eerie glow across the cockpit. The

ALSO CONSIDER

PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING (EA Classics, £14.99) An off-shoot of the *Wing Commander* series, *Privateer 2* is starting to look its age, but the high-quality FMV story and freeform gameplay make it more than worthwhile. Not quite as epic in scope as *X*, but certainly more accessible. **PCZ#44, 94%**

Freespace: The Great War (Interplay, £29.99) No trading, just alien killing, but the best example of it so far. The graphics are still amazing and the interface is a work of pure genius. Watch out for the sequel, the demo of which is on this month's cover CD. **PCZ#66, 89%**

ELITE (Acomsoft, N/A) If you're willing to delve into the murky world of emulation, you can download versions of *Elite* from the original BBC version to a demo GameBoy rendition. The PC version wasn't too hot, but you can find it at Ian Bell's site at www.clix.co.uk/~ibell/elite/.

game has an almost hypnotic effect at times, perfectly in tune with the pace of the game. Again, it's not for everyone, but for the *Elite* fan, frustrated for 15 years, *X* throws you into an alien universe rich with life and awash with atmosphere.

At times you'll feel hopelessly lost, at others captivated by the unfolding story. Its presentation is unique and its scope breathtaking. If you play *X* for a day, you'll still be at it six months later. What more could you possibly ask? **EW**

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Highly atmospheric • Vast scope — trade, fight and build factories • Detailed economic model • Fantastic value — will take months to complete

DOWNERS Frustrating and slow to begin with • Extra missions and dialogue needed • No multiplayer options, but so what?

90 A vast and diverse space-bound epic



Make sure you get permission before attempting to dock.

FRONTIER

WALKTHROUGH

FIRST ENCOUNTERS BEYOND THE FRONTIER

A day in the high-speed life of a budding space combat pilot

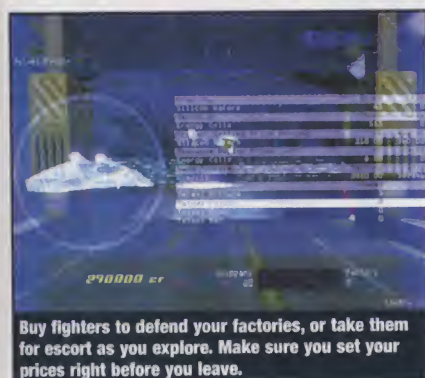


One of the jumpgates that link each of the many sectors.

Thankfully, docking is a lot easier than it is in *Elite*. Just make sure you're at half speed.



Taking on destroyers is not a good idea early on.



Buy fighters to defend your factories, or take them for escort as you explore. Make sure you set your prices right before you leave.



You can pick up cargo from your fallen prey, you heartless mercenary.



1 00:00h.08m With an intro sequence like this, the end one should be pretty spectacular. (Don't bet on it — Ed)



2 00:00h.21m It's fly through the hoops time. Thankfully, you can skip through this and shoot some drones.



3 00:00h.37m Time to test the engines. Oh dear.



4 00:00h.41m "You're ugly and I don't want your stinking help."



5 00:03h.07m Once you've checked out some prices and bought some merchandise, you can test out some serious kit.



6 00:15h.24m Extending your cargo bay gets increasingly expensive. You'd better build a factory, then.



7 01:04h.52m Loaded. Now it's time to really get started.



8 01:04h.53m Bloody pirates — a pain in the arse.



Some factories are common to each race, but they can look very different. Which is nice.

DRAKAN: ORDER OF THE FLAME

★ £34.99 • GT Interactive • Out now

A new busty heroine has arrived. She can ride dragons, but can she tame *Mark Hill*?

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card
WE SAY A P233 with 64Mb RAM

Considering the phenomenal success of the *Tomb Raider* series, it's amazing that we haven't been swamped by legions of large-breasted explorers jumping around the screen. Who knows how well *Heretic II* would have done if it had featured a slender girl instead of a man with pointy ears. Psygnosis have made no such mistake. Not only does *Drakan* fall into the genre-of-the-moment that is 'action slash adventure' (there's a feature in those words somewhere), but the main character is also female and well endowed.

The story begins when Rynn returns to her village from a stroll in the woods to find it being pillaged by two-legged warthogs led by a dark knight. They kill half of the population and capture the other half, including Rynn's little brother, to work in some godforsaken mines. Cue a search for a dragon to help you fight evil hordes, complete sub-missions and find the kidnapped brat.

LIVE BY THE SWORD

If *Heretic II* was *Tomb Raider* with spells, then *Drakan* is *Tomb Raider* with dragons. Not that we enjoy pigeonholing games into strict and unimaginative categories.

In actual fact, a more accurate description would probably be *Golden Axe 3D*. Anyone who remembers the old coin-op will find the monsters and the way red potions pop out of their recently slain bodies instantly familiar.

True, the dragons in that game were earthbound, but their balls of fire are not dissimilar. Having said that, there's no point denying that Rynn is Lara Croft with swords and axes, and given teenagers' enthusiasm for Xena The Warrior Princess, she should prove a big hit among the testosterone-driven population of gamers (ie 95 five per cent of it). Apart from the obvious similarities in the bosom and ponytail areas, Rynn also has her healthy share of acrobatic moves. The control method works brilliantly and is highly reminiscent of the one in *Hidden & Dangerous*, using a combination of mouse and keyboard that suits combat perfectly. As a result, the sword fighting is the best seen in any game yet, far better than in *Deathtrap Dungeon* or *Die By The Sword*, or even *Redguard*.

As you progress through the

“The control method works brilliantly, using a combination of mouse and keyboard that suits combat perfectly. As a result, the sword fighting is the best seen in any game yet”

game you acquire different weapons, all of which handle slightly differently. For example, a long sword is faster and has a greater reach than a battle-axe, but it won't cause as much damage. When you pick up a bow and arrow you can go into a first-person perspective, zooming in for higher accuracy. However, this

Holiday snap number 12: “Here I am in front of some slaughtered Wartoks. Having lovely weather.”



doesn't work as well as it did in *Thief*, since it takes too many arrows, no matter how accurately placed, to kill an enemy for it to be a viable alternative. Rynn borrows another page from the *Thief* book by being able to sneak undetected behind trolls. The game rewards this stealthy approach by making hits on unprepared monsters count double, thus discouraging running straight at the enemy like a mindless hacking machine.

And then there's the dragon.

ENTER THE DRAGON

Riding Arok is the wonderful experience you'd expect it to be. On the ground, the dragon's

Arok is gliding gracefully through the sky, the next he's bashing into mountains like he's had one too many Special Brews. The problems start when you try to dodge fireballs from giant catapults and other dragons while at the same time trying to aim your own. Once the initial excitement of being airborne is over, the dragon sections become an annoying but necessary way of getting from one place to another.

And, as if flying the dragon wasn't hard enough, the ground game is far from easy. Every time you come out of a fight you need a bottle or two of health elixir. Enemies duck and jump out of the way, while some of them carry large shields to block your blows. Then you meet a fire-casting, two sword-wielding, heavy armour-wearing knight who has you somersaulting all over the place, dying very quickly indeed and wishing your pride had let you choose the easy setting at the start of the game.

SHALLOW AND AMAZONS

The gameplay is linear, but open enough to have plenty of the 'annoying running around lost' scenarios *Tomb Raider* players will be so familiar with. There are some interesting features, such as trees that can be chopped down to cross pits, and boulders

ALSO CONSIDER

TOMB RAIDER III (Eidos

Interactive, £34.99) The latest, biggest and most impressive in the series – until number IV arrives. *TRIII*'s biggest draw (apart from the obvious) is its use of real-life locations. **PCZ #72, 91%**

ASGHAN: THE DRAGON SLAYER (Grolier Interactive, £29.99)

Despite being a poor game, *Asghan* is worth mentioning because it is so similar to *Drakan* in concept, only you slay dragons, rather than ride them. It must be a male/female thing. **PCZ #75, 50%**

HERETIC II (Activision, £39.99)

Using the *Quake II* engine in a third-person action/adventure was always going to be a gamble. While the eye candy is rich and sweet, the gameplay is a tad too consoley. **PCZ #72, 83%**

than can be pushed down hills in true Roadrunner fashion to squash unsuspecting orcs. Occasionally, you come across traps, false floors and wobbly structures, and there are scripted moments where a monster breaks through a wall or tortures a villager. While these little surprises do break the monotony, they don't have you jumping from your seat in shock, anxious to find out what's round the next cave.

You can't help feeling that it could all have been so much better if more role-playing and adventure elements had been introduced. Every weapon you pick up has statistics on damage, range and durability, all of which make you hunger for stats on Rynn herself. There are cut-scenes where you talk to other characters, gain information and get sent on missions, but there is no interactivity involved.

Drakan is by no means a bad game. Fighting is fun and an effort has been made to draw you into the action. Ultimately, though, it's a shallow game that could have offered so much more. **PCZ**

PCZ VERDICT

● **UPPERS** Excellent sword combat and controls • Nice, crisp graphics • Good range of weapons

● **DOWNERS** Dragon bits boring and annoying • Not enough interaction • You die far too often

79 *Tomb Raider with dragons or Golden Axe 3D*



Tsk! Six hours of stretching and he still won't confess. Get out the Geri Halliwell tape."



Watch out – there's another dragon ahead. And this one can fly straight.



"Didn't Luke Skywalker do away with you? And whatever happened to your fat friend?"

Dragons can be so melodramatic sometimes.

Come hither, I shall smother thee with my cleavage.



Watch out, this girl is on fire.



Wartoks don't take kindly to having lunch interrupted.



No fantasy game is complete without a giant spider.



One woman and her dragon. Looks like he knows how to give her a good time.

MULTIPLAYING WITH FIRE

Cat fights! Just like Romford on a Saturday night!

Drakan features a multiplayer option which pitches woman against woman, dragon against dragon or a combination of both. The mêlée deathmatch is pretty straightforward hack 'n' slash, with players running around a small arena sword-fragging each other. The proximity required for combat doesn't quite turn the fights into an armed version of *Tekken*, but it's fun nonetheless. A greater variety of moves would have avoided the 'who can hack faster' that eventually ensues, and no, there is no naked mud wrestling option, so calm your little filthy minds down. The Dragon Duel suffers from the same shortcomings as the single-player game, and you'll soon tire of seeing the winged beasts spinning uncontrollably as they try to fry each other. In short, another wasted opportunity.



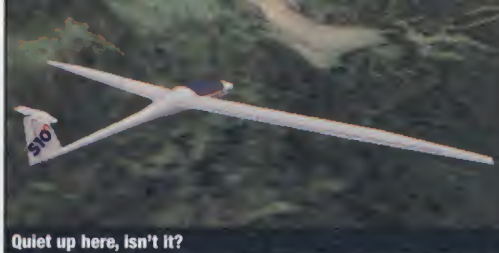
Winning the dragon duel is more a question of luck than skill.



"You cow! You spilled my Malibu and lemonade!"



All planes are accurately modelled on their real-life counterparts.



Quiet up here, isn't it?



A rapidly approaching runway. Yikes!



Really realistic.



Multiple camera views are of course available.



Aha! A real aeroplane.



There's no arcade mode. Learn to fly or die.



Is this a cockpit? Yes, I think it is.

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III

★ £34.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

About 300 years ago, **Simon Bradley** reviewed *Flight Unlimited*. Let's see what he makes of the sequel to the sequel...

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A PII 400, 64Mb RAM, plenty of spare hard disk space for saved games

PCZONE CLASSIC

ALSO CONSIDER

FLIGHT SIM 98 (Microsoft, £39.99)

Superb sim, but lacking atmosphere and without the variety of aircraft. It does include a helicopter, though.

PCZ #55, 94%

Looking at the review of the original in April '95, it's great to see that, at first glance, Looking Glass have worked on the basis that if it ain't broke, don't try to fix it. Back then, we got all excited about great graphics, superb flight models and the sort of atmosphere you just didn't get in flight sims. Sadly, there was also the small matter of the huge processor power and disk space needed to run the sim properly. The recommended spec was a P90 with 16Mb and 120Mb of free hard disk space.

Well, brace yourself – *Flight Unlimited III* comes on three CDs and, if you go for a full install, will eat up nearly 3Gb of disk space. We reviewed it on a PII/400 with 128Mb and a Voodoo 3/3000 AGP card. That's not cutting-edge spec, I agree, but it's pretty damn quick. When things were happening, we were getting unflyably slow frame rates until we cranked the detail levels down. We're talking about a machine which barely comes above entry spec for running this sim properly.

THE REAL THING

There are no difficulty settings in *FUIII*. You have a choice of realistic flight or loading something else. And by 'realistic flight', we do mean realistic. It includes everything that made its illustrious predecessor so good – proper wind effects, propeller wash, nasty turbulence and so on. There are more aircraft than before, including the glider from the previous version of the game (although, sadly, the glider is now motor-assisted, so you don't get to try the real challenge of a tow

launch), plus the unusual opportunity to fly a floatplane. And because of the extra features offered by PCs these days, you get full force feedback support, proper weather (lightning, rain and snow, the lot) and some really groovy cloud and sun effects. I'm sorry I just said 'groovy', but when you fly it you'll see what I mean. It's really a very good sim.

PEACE, MAN

True, there's no shooting, but that doesn't have to be an issue. I find *MS Flight Simulator* dull, but *Flight Unlimited III* has far more to do. For a start, the ground looks like ground; trees and buildings look sort of integrated – unlike *FS98*, where they look stuck on. There's radio chatter going on in the background, and if you're carrying passengers or an instructor, they talk to you.

In short, *FUIII* has atmosphere in a way that *MS Combat Flight Sim* can't even dream of. In one of the pre-set challenges, you even get to track Bigfoot – and you can see him, too, if you get it right. (At least I think I did.) And just for good measure, you can use the

radio, set up navigation aids, and do all the things you have to do in *FS98*. But it still remains a laugh. This sim will stay loaded well after your copy of *FS98* has been sold off at a car boot sale.

THIS IS IT

FUIII is very, very good. If you're a pilot, or a budding pilot, or if you simply want to fly around without having to shoot at stuff (weird!) then this is the sim for you. No ifs, buts or anything else. Unless, of course, you're stuck with a PC which is slower than mine. In which case, upgrade first, or you'll be disappointed. **PCZ**

PCZ VERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Excellent flight models

- Fantastic graphics • Big flying area • Ace pre-set challenges
- Atmosphere

↓ **DOWNERS** No helicopters • A little bit (!) resource-hungry • No shooting

90 I'd even buy it with my own money

“Flight Unlimited III has atmosphere in a way that MS Combat Flight Sim can't even dream of”

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There's about to be an accident, hopefully.



Riding through a dust cloud. Note subtle graphical effects.



Riders bounce down the track but, like in *The A Team*, no-one gets hurt.

GP500

★ £34.99 • Hasbro Interactive • Out now

He's dangerous enough on four wheels, so putting *Craig Vaughan* astride two was probably rather foolish...

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** DirectX-compatible 3D accelerator **WE SAY** On yer bike – you'll need A P266 and 64Mb RAM to get off the starting grid

PCZONE
RECOMMENDED

ALSO CONSIDER

CASTROL HONDA SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONS (Interactive Entertainment, £34.99) Another hard-nosed bike racing sim with average graphics, despite the high minimum specs. Infinitely variable and with an idiot-proof arcade mode.

PCZ #65, 78%

SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP (EA Sports, £34.99) Some six months old, but until now the leader of a two-bike race. Tough, comprehensive and engaging, but with limited AI.

PCZ #75, 82%

Bikes are dangerous. And that's a fact. The people who ride them – with complete disregard for their own mortality – don't help, but it's the actual bikes that are lethal. Why anyone would want to ride something that can't stand up unaided is open to debate, but to do so at 140mph with nothing but a leather suit protecting your manhood seems like recklessness in the extreme.

Nonetheless, the riders and teams of the FIM-sponsored GP500 Championship recently returned for another season of international track-based racing, having licensed their antics to Hasbro Interactive. The game has been scripted by veteran codeshop Melbourne House, and our kangaroo-loving cousins are clearly obsessive about the type of two-wheeled shenanigans on offer

here – the anal retentiveness of the adjustable bike features should leave you in no doubt that we're in trainspotting territory.

LOSING YOUR GRIP

Despite this, it all seems straightforward enough – and you'll no doubt forego reading the manual as a result. Leaving 'simulation mode' switched on, you're on the grid and pulling away in seconds. Quite why you 'wheelie' when you accelerate, the manual no

doubt explains – if you opened the cellophane wrapper, that is.

To the first bend and, showing true sportsmanship, your opponents have kindly moved out of your way, allowing you to... crash unceremoniously (they took

Motorbikin' – dangerous but fun, apparently.

the racing line while you forfeited your genitals). Repeated failed attempts to negotiate that first bend throw up two possible solutions, the most obvious being to study the manual. If you choose to ignore this sensible advice, you'll be reduced to the equivalent of slapping on L-plates and cruising the courses at 30mph. If it sounds daunting, it is, because what we've got here is the biking equivalent of *TOCA* (PCZ #59, 86%). So, providing you salivate uncontrollably at the mere mention of gear ratios, brake manipulation, suspension adjustments, engine configurations and sprockets, then congratulations, your ride has arrived – prepare to race like Bambi on ice. However, given that EA have already satiated sim freaks with *Superbike World Championship* (PCZ #75, 82%), Hasbro have thoughtfully catered for newbies by including a more accessible, if less rewarding, arcade mode that reduces the game to *Redline Racer* (PCZ #71, 72%) proportions.

Once into the game proper,



“Your proximity to the ground when using the ‘head cam’ view gives an adrenalin-inducing sensation of speed”



The ‘helmet cam’ will make you puke.



Boobs and bikes – a winning combination.

you'll find a 'by numbers' reprisal of the standard racing formula – time trial, practice, one-off race or the full championship season. Providing you have the necessary hardware, you'll find that the 3D engine offers a superb draw distance and arcade-quality graphics (low-end users can reduce the visual splendour to suit their needs). Your proximity to the ground – especially when using the 'head cam' view – gives an adrenalin-inducing sensation of speed that will have you swaying in your seat in scenes reminiscent of *3D Deathchase* on the Spectrum.

The design of the 14 courses is downright evil and makes Birmingham's Spaghetti Junction look like a two-piece jigsaw. The treachery of the track design is compounded by the lacklustre movies which preview them – compared to the superbly implemented replay system (see Time After Time panel, right) they're no help at all. As if to compensate, your computer opponents can be 'dumbed down', but you'll find that playing

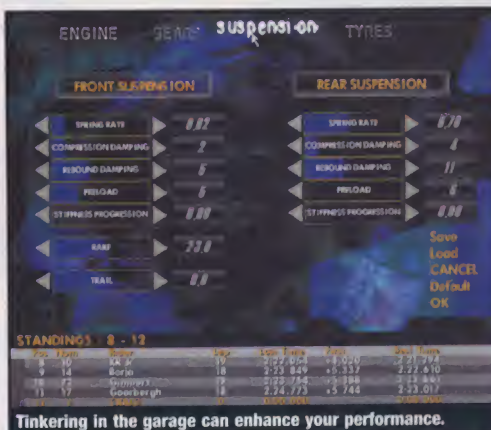
God causes its own problems. Over-crank the AI and you'll face lap after lonely lap of playing catch up, but retard your fellow competitors too much and they'll disregard the racing line and drive like crash test dummies – achieving the right balance is vital to avoid frustration.

DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD

Speaking of crashes, they're rather spectacular – if not permanently damaging to rider or bike. Now, we're not demanding blood-soaked Tarmac or *Saving Private Ryan*-style dismemberment, but some degree of visible injury and fender bending would have added to the visual splendour and the strategy.

The pits are a letdown, too, devoid as they are of animation – a cut-scene of harried mechanics repairing and replacing various items would have added some spice to the atmosphere, which otherwise relies on some excellent engine noises and an excitable crowd.

If it sounds like we're moaning, it's only because such



Tinkering in the garage can enhance your performance.

niceties would have been wonderful additions to an already sound package. It's certainly on a technical par with *Superbike World Championship*, and surpasses it in many gameplay areas, offering a sterner challenge and greater rewards.

You won't warm to *GP500* instantly, but perseverance brings with it a growing appreciation of its finer points. And, because winning the championship will elude you for months, once you are hooked you'll certainly keep coming back for more. Now then, where's that bloody manual? [E]

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Looks good • Very

challenging • Loads of tracks

• Excellent replay facilities

DOWNERS High minimum spec

• Will scare newbies • Poor track

previews • No rider or bike damage

80

A slow burner that rewards perseverance

THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE

Unlike Formula 1, the specifications of all the machines are fairly closely matched. Here's a rundown of the featured bikes

THE YAMAHA YZR 500



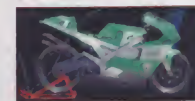
Engine: 500cc
Output: 180bhp
Weight: 131kg
Tyres: Dunlop

THE HONDA NSR 500V



Engine: 500cc
Output: 180bhp
Weight: 135kg
Tyres: Michelin

THE ELF MUZ



Engine: 500cc
Output: 160bhp
Weight: 131kg
Tyres: Michelin

THE SUZUKI RGV 500



Engine: 500cc V4
Output: 180bhp
Weight: 131kg
Tyres: Michelin

THE MONDENAS KR3



Engine: 500cc V3
Output: 160bhp
Weight: 116kg
Tyres: Dunlop

TIME AFTER TIME

Do that to me Baby one more time...

GP500 isn't the first racing game to include a replay mode – but what's on offer here is more than simple eye candy (gorgeous though it is). The replay options are as comprehensive as they are useful, allowing you to view the action from a variety of static cameras situated around the courses, or monitor your performance from behind your bike or from a 'helmet cam' perspective. Given the unforgiving nature of the racing, you'll find the ability to hijack other bikes – to watch how they tackled certain aspects of the race – can lend a tactical edge, too.



The replays are simply stunning.

THERE ARE FLIGHT SIMULATORS.



AND THERE IS FLIGHT.



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ABOMINATION: THE NEMESIS PROJECT

★ £34.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out now

Does this game live up to its name, or is it actually a bit of all right? Paul Mallinson weighs it up

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 32Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** All major sound cards and 3D cards **WE SAY** Judders badly on the minimum system specified – best played with more memory (64Mb+)

PCZONE
RECOMMENDED

Abomination: The Nemesis Project should really have been called *Abomination: The X-COM Tribute*, such is the resemblance to the MicroProse classic. But there's nothing wrong with taking a good idea and presenting it differently, which is why *Abomination: The Nemesis Project* is such a tempting prospect for budding armchair strategists.

On the face of it, the similarities to *X-COM* are many and varied – the isometric 3D view, the point-and-click interface, ground roots, street-to-street combat. Beneath this familiar exterior, though, are two fundamental differences that separate *Abomination* from *X-COM*: real-time combat and randomly generated missions.

Your aim, whether you play a campaign or a one-off encounter (including over the Internet or by email), is to kill off a sinister cult which has risen from the spread of a worldwide plague. From a satellite map of the battle zone (in this case, present-day America) you command The Nemesis Project, a group of enhanced super-soldiers trying to restore order to a chaotic world, while surveying for activity and sending in the boys whenever anything kicks off.

PAUSE FOR A BREATH

Abomination's designers' main aim was to make their game real-time, and the result is a particularly fraught style of gameplay. Luckily for us (and them), they've included a very

handy 'Pause' function, which allows you to freeze the action but still move around and issue orders while time stands still. *Abomination* is so hard, and the enemy so ruthless, that the game would almost certainly have failed without it.

At first the weapons are fairly conventional, but taking time to search the battlefield reaps rewards. In campaign mode you need to upgrade your weapons and keep an eye on your ammo to progress, so searching every hidden object is a must. In addition to this, you have the small matter of primary and secondary objectives to address, ranging from enemy clear-outs and demolition missions to defending a sudden ambush.

RANDOM KILLING

As we mentioned earlier, *Abomination* features randomly generated missions. There are 40 different terrain types, each with between 15 and 35 templates, 60 primary objectives and a dozen secondary ones, not to mention shedloads of other minor variations. No two missions are ever the same, which in some ways is a good thing because it gives you an almost infinite variety of missions but, in reality, it depersonalises the game with the result that the story becomes less important.

Despite this, *Abomination* is a fairly gripping game. It's nowhere near as disgusting and scary as the designers claim, but it does have some good music and eerie sound effects to set the scene, and pulling off a particularly difficult mission is very satisfying.

Unfortunately, though, there are a number of niggly problems that hold *Abomination* back from being a Classic. Firstly, the pathfinding AI is dodgy – on more

than one occasion we found stray troops taking 'the long way round', which jeopardises all the hard work you've done at the planning stage. Thankfully, your soldiers' autonomy can be turned down, and use of the Pause mode eliminates the need to rely on AI during combat.

The second niggle – the fact that your field of view is restricted to a small percentage of the overall playing area, depending on which soldier is selected – is more of a problem. Why the

“The designers' main aim was to make their game real-time, and the result is a particularly fraught style of gameplay”

designers chose to do this is a mystery, especially when you consider that you are prevented from 'spying' on the entire battlefield by the fact that enemy soldiers only become visible when they're nearby. It only serves to accentuate the level of difficulty, not to mention the initial frustration.

Abomination: The Nemesis Project doesn't have the depth or the captive audience of the Gollop brothers' classics, but it is more than capable of fulfilling the fantasies of almost every hardened digital warlord out there – at least until *X-COM Genesis* arrives late next year. **PCZ**

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Detailed, colourful graphics
• Solid interface • Randomly generated landscapes • Pause mode
• Very challenging

DOWNERS Ropy pathfinding AI
• Restricted view • Randomly generated landscapes • Very difficult

80 An excellent tactical combat game, despite itself



Tell your troops to shoot at cars when there are loads of enemies nearby.

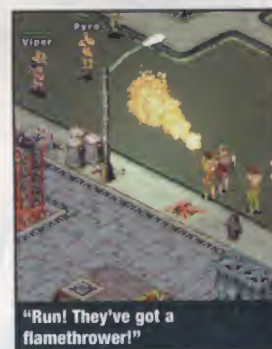


In some missions you have to split your team in two and activate separate switches within a strict time limit.

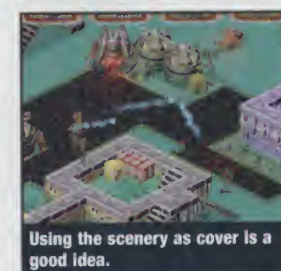
ALSO CONSIDER

X-COM APOCALYPSE (MicroProse, £9.99) The epitome of team-based tactical combat games. It's getting on a bit now, but still works well on the latest PCs. **PCZ #52, 95%**

MAGIC & MAYHEM (Virgin, £14.99) Combat and tactics in a magic-filled world, from the Gollop brothers – the creators of the original *X-COM*. **PCZ #70, 92%**



Arming explosive devices is a very risky business.



Using the scenery as cover is a good idea.



This is your overview of the battlefield.

Have you clicked yet?



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Argentina, cheating as usual.



The excellent replay mode offers loads of viewpoints.



It might look a bit like Beckham, but it isn't.



Names appear on shirts, but who are these people?



You can even look the wrong way to throw the keeper.



Some of the stadiums are fictional futuristic affairs.

INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL 2000

★ £34.99 • Microsoft • Out now

There might be hundreds of football games, but there's only one **Steve Hill**. And we can all be grateful for that

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P133 Memory 32Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** D3D cards
WE SAY A P200 with 64Mb of RAM and a decent 3D card should do it

ALSO CONSIDER

FIFA 99 (EA Sports, £19.99) Long considered the king of football games, it's surely now living on borrowed time. **PCZ #71, 92%**

ACTUA SOCCER 3 (Gremlin Interactive, £39.99) Much of a muchness, it's fair to say that the world can wait for the fourth instalment. **PCZ #72, 89%**

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 98-99 (Eidos Interactive, £39.99) The best use yet of the *World League Soccer* engine, but essentially it's the same game. **PCZ #76, 86%**

THE FA PREMIER LEAGUE STARS (EA Sports, £34.99) Extremely authentic representation of the Premiership (complete with real-life stadiums) marred by moribund gameplay. **PCZ #81, 73%**

**PCZONE
RECOMMENDED**

It is a testament to Microsoft's commitment to games that in the space of a couple of years their status has risen from laughing stock to respected publisher with an impressive portfolio of titles in a number of genres. As far as football is concerned though, their only foray into the field resulted in the unmitigated humiliation that was *Microsoft Soccer*. Keen to make amends for this aberration, they enlisted the services of Rage and the result is the polysyllabic *International Football 2000*. Rage may have recently forged a reputation for elaborate explosions, but they do have

some football heritage via the *Striker* series (this title was originally intended to be an addition). They are also renowned for their graphical prowess, and *IF2000* is no exception, arguably proving to be the best looking of the current crop of football games.

ACTION, MAN

Football is all about action though, and *IF2000* has it in abundance, with the emphasis on getting the ball into the box as quickly as possible, unhampered by the gimmicky special moves favoured by other games. Despite its international pretensions, the style is far more redolent of the hurly-burly of the Premiership, with time on the ball at a modicum and no quarter asked nor given in the challenge. Goalmouth scrambles are commonplace, as are extravagant saves and, with two evenly matched sides, it is genuinely end-to-end stuff. The speed of the game can be varied, and at its fastest levels it's enough to evoke memories of the epic *SWOS*, a notion furthered by a typically ebullient Jonathan Pearce commentary. Whereas his over-the-top approach might grate over the course of 90

minutes, it's actually well suited to a computer game and matches the frantic nature of the action. Alongside him is the eminently more laconic Ron Atkinson, who sounds as if he is reading from a script, which of course he is, although to the script writer's

edit the players, but it will be utilised only by life prisoners, serial loners and the unemployed.

At the end of the day, *International Football 2000* is a better game than EA's *FA Premier League Stars*, but the fact remains that it won't sell

“All of the player names are made up, something that may not trouble the casual player but will annoy genuine footie fans”

credit, he's managed to get Big Ron to bastardise Alan Partridge's “foot like a traction engine” quote.

NAME GAME

Essentially, *IF2000* is straightforward arcade stuff, making for an exciting game of football, as opposed to a tactical stand off. The temptation to tamper with your team is also lessened by the fact that all the player names are made up, something that might not trouble the casual player but will annoy genuine football fans. Naming players after members of the development team might be hilarious ‘in the office’, but does nothing for someone who's just shelled out 35 quid for the game. Of course, there is an option to

anywhere near the same number of copies. Those who do buy it will enjoy it though, and it would be interesting to see what Rage could do with a decent licence. Now that would be a commitment. [B]

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Superb graphics • Spectacular goals • Brilliant replay mode

DOWNERS Fictitious player names • Static keepers • Congested midfield

85 Fun-packed footie action that doesn't break the mould

NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2000

★ £34.99 • Microsoft • Out Nov

Spectacular dunks are obligatory. Everybody else looks away in disgust.



NBA Inside Drive 2000 will make you dribble like an idiot.



Basketball: not a sport for short people.



The reflections on the court are extremely well done.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 166 Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A 266 with 64Mb RAM and a 3D card

PCZONE
RECOMMENDED

Most of you will probably be as excited about the release of a new basketball game as you would be about a tiddlywink simulator. Well, you can go back to your comatose three-day test cricket and your *Neighbours* omnibus, because *Inside Drive 2000* rocks big slam-dunking bells.

Like any other big sport sim, it has to face up to its EA equivalent, in this case *NBA Live 99* (PCZ #73, 87%) and it does so admirably. There are a couple of features that haven't been included, such as the player editor and the three-point shoot-outs, but the game itself is so damn playable, you'll hardly miss them. The commentary is excellent for the first hour or so, then it becomes intermittently irritating and informative. Moreover, the animation of the players is superb, although they're not quite as life-like as they should have been. Even if you know nothing about NBA stars, you'll probably

notice that Shaquille O'Neil's head is about double the size of any well-proportioned person's.

What lifts *NBA ID2000* above any other ping-pong with hoops effort is how easy it is to get your players to do what you want, even to the point of advanced tactics and combinations. Unlike football games, once you've got possession, the ball is yours until you have a go at the points or do something stupid – there's none of that midfield tussle and constant tackling. As a consequence, play can build up slowly, and when both attacking and defending you are able to rely more on positional movement than on frantic button-bashing. The spectacular moves, the adrenalin-soaked battles in the dying seconds of a match and the sheer playability make this one of the most addictive conversions of any sport, and well worth getting – even if you already own *NBA 99*.

Mark Hill

PCZVERDICT

86%



The boxers' faces get bloody and bruised, but there's no hugging, for some reason.

K.O.

★ £29.99 • Data Becker • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D accelerator **WE SAY** P233 for slightly faster blockiness

Any game that proudly announces its association with the *Daily Star* has a lot to answer for. This pitiful excuse for a newspaper hardly brings to mind thoughts of high quality, realism and liberal principles, but given how modern boxing is closer to a classist version of the World Wrestling Federation, the relationship is hardly surprising. What is surprising is the absence of half-naked women holding up cardboard numbers between rounds, which was the one thing we were actually looking forward to.

Anyway, to the game itself. You can choose to get in the ring at the local training gym, where a coach shouts out lots of unhelpful suggestions, have a single fight or start a campaign to become world champion. There are no real-life boxers, although you can create your own, but the real problem is how dull punching someone repeatedly can be. This is the world of heavyweights, where graceful, light-footed movements haven't been seen since the glory days of Muhammad Ali, so all you do is get close to your opponent and smack each other until one falls down. There is slightly more to it than that: you can block and dodge punches, you need to manage your energy bar (fall too low and you can hardly lift a glove) and pick out your opponent's weak spot (left rib, right eyebrow?). However, unless you choose the hardest difficulty setting and choose to play as a really crap boxer, it's far too easy to become world champion. It takes about five minutes on the easy setting and a whole quarter of an hour on the medium. Just like the real thing, where people have paid a fortune to watch a high-profile fight on cable, it's usually all over in the first round. Unlike the real thing, you won't be staying up until the small hours playing it.

Mark Hill

PCZVERDICT

53%

INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN 2

★ Empire Sport • £34.99 • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P75 Memory 16Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 1Mb DirectX-compatible video card **WE SAY** You'll need a P166 and a 4Mb graphics card before you go into bat

PCZONE RECOMMENDED

Empire's reluctance to speed us a copy of *International Cricket Captain 2* was understandable, given our robust treatment of the prequel, *International Cricket Captain* (PCZ #66, 68%). However, as flawed as the original was, the fact that cricket management simulations are as rare as England victories ensured its commercial success. Now, with the recent World Cup farce just a fading memory, Empire have struck back with a sequel that deserves first class honours – combining EA presentation and style with *Championship Manager* tactics and strategy.

Fans of the original will be delighted to hear that Empire have addressed its two main flaws: they've added a thoroughly entertaining two-player mode and modified the AI so that your managerial decisions now have a defining impact at the crease. The graphics have had a facelift, too. The in-game action is now depicted admirably, and the commentary – provided by Jonathan

Agnew – is crisp and instructive, and has no trouble keeping up with the action. Novices may feel slightly overwhelmed – a situation that's not helped by the brevity of the manual – but the 'quick start' option means that batting, bowling and other match variables can be ignored in favour of diving straight into the action.

During play, there's a near-infinite variety of strategic options on offer, and it's supremely gratifying to snatch victory from defeat with a well-timed change of bowler, tactic or field setting. The addition of the 1999 National League (complete with pyjama-clad players) and the host of new cups and internationals on offer complement the day-to-day wheeler-dealing typical of most football management games to produce a well-balanced blend of on-field action and 'behind-the-scenes' strategy. Despite the game's alarming propensity for crashing and some intermittently dodgy presentation (both matters are being addressed with a patch), this is a supremely comprehensive and engaging package that knocks the competition – and the original – for six.

Craig Vaughan

PCZVERDICT

85%



The scoreboard hosts many of the strategic variables.



Spot the ball. Answers to the usual address, please.



"Don't shoot! We weren't tampering with the ball, honest."



The new Shaman gets to grips with battle tactics.

POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING - UNDISCOVERED WORLDS

★ £9.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P133 Memory 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** A P266 greatly enhances the experience, and you need to have the original game installed as well

PCZONE RECOMMENDED

The old Shaman has ascended to the heavens as an immortal, and in her place a new Shaman has arrived. Divine chaos rules as the four tribes of the Gods attempt to tear each other to pieces, again.

Initially intended to bolster the relatively weak multiplayer aspect of *Populous: The Beginning*, the *Undiscovered Worlds* mission disc is actually a worthy addition in both departments. With 12 new single-player and 12 multiplayer levels at just £10, the 'A' level students among you will deduce that at little more than 40p a level, this is probably a good deal.

It's not just the price that makes this a useful purchase, either. Bullfrog have clearly been touched by some kind of divine inspiration when it comes to imaginative new level design. The first single-player stage illustrates this perfectly. Our rookie Shaman stands bemused on the beach of a strange new world, where she is quickly assisted by the old Shaman, who – keen to show off her flashy new powers – coolly blasts the enemy with a salvo of lightning, earthquake, fire rain and volcano spells. Suitably impressed, the new Shaman marches forward and finishes the job.

Further highlights include redirecting lava flow through enemy villages, assaulting a giant fortress and rescuing the Shaman from prison in a pseudo CTF-type affair. Needless to say, the multiplayer levels contain similar amounts of fun and frolics. This is not just a sightseeing tour, though. One thing you must remember above everything else is that these levels are difficult. Seriously rock hard. But what do you expect? You've already completed the original, right?

Keith Pullin

PCZVERDICT

84%

UNREAL MISSION PACK: RETURN TO NA PALI

★ £12.99 • GT Interactive • Out now



This is as good as the scenery gets with this engine.



New fast-moving, scary lizards. Kill them. All of them.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P133 Memory 16Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** TCP/IP multiplayer **WE SAY** P200 with 32Mb RAM and 3D accelerator

It's funny to think that *Unreal* was once state-of-the-art, kick-in-the-teeth, rob-your-granny brilliant. Some were not sold on its charms, even though it brought vibrant colours and procedural particle effects to a previously brown genre. Most people gave it a play, however, enjoyed it and moved on.

So it comes as some surprise that a staggering length of time after *Unreal* was released, we have the first mission pack, *Return To Na Pali*, in which you quite literally return to Na Pali, only a day after escaping from the freaking planet in the last game.

This time around, you get press-ganged into rescuing a datacore from a downed spaceship, the Prometheus, which has crash-landed somewhere deep in Skaarj territory.

Thankfully, your allies have dropped weapons and health canisters all over the planet, so at least there's some motivation for blowing up boxes and exploring every corner of every Skaarj fortress, Nali town and underwater labyrinth you come across. There are 38

new levels and – we're afraid to say – you must trundle through each, one by one, in a very old-fashioned, linear way.

The venerable old *Unreal* engine is also looking its age. In the first section of the game, we are expected to believe that yonder textured box is a hill, and that a brown pipe with a couple of polygons on top is a tree. The recently released *Unreal Tournament* massively increases the details of *Unreal* models and textures, as well as beefing up the weapons and sounds. It is sorely missed here. The monsters look dire and their attempts at AI – rolling from side to side – are laughable. Most of the weapons are barely better than potato-guns, while the linear, level-by-level style of game play is far too monotonous for anyone who's clambered their way out of a Black Mesa facility.

Having said that, there's a dollop of real drama when you finally make it to the Prometheus and have a tense stalking match around the only convincing locale this engine can render – the corridors of a spaceship. If you liked *Unreal* and are desperate for another fix, this may suit you. Otherwise, it's too little, too late.

David McCandless

PCZ VERDICT

71%

MAYDAY: CONFLICT EARTH

★ £25.99 • JoWood Productions • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P133 Memory 16Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** TCP/IP multiplayer **WE SAY** P200 with 32Mb RAM

Remember 1995? That was the year the first Pentium chips appeared, just in time to make the new-fangled Windows 95 vaguely bearable. Fast modems sucked 14,400 bits every second, and the double-speed CD-ROM drive you needed to play Virgin's *The 7th Guest* cost £200. And, of course, there was *Red Alert*.

Yes, everyone knows about *Red Alert*. You know the rules, you've done the moves, you've seen the countless imitations. And you're about to turn the page because you're sure that *Mayday* is just another pale facsimile. But wait! Even some of the most recent real-time strategy benchmarks



It's just like an old hat.

could be seen as mere *Command & Conquer* derivatives – why dismiss this one? Ah, yes. The score.

Mayday follows a well-trodden path, and it does so with none of the pace, brio, excitement, visual razzmatazz or satisfaction of its rivals.

Things kick off badly, with the installation program failing to detect a secondary CD-ROM drive, and go downhill thereafter. The third-party video drivers play havoc with existing software, take an age to remove by hand and don't support hardware acceleration.

The 40 or so missions are varied, but nowadays feel old and conventional. The units are a clichéd assortment of troops, factories, ore refineries, tanks, helicopters and boats.

A visual glitch causes the map to ghost its own image on the opposite edge of the screen, and sound effects, such as the din of small arms fire, shut off abruptly the moment the gunner walks out of view. To cap it all, support on the website *ist nur auf Deutsch*.

To sum up, *Mayday* is less of a game than *Red Alert* ever was, and it's an absolute mystery why anyone would want to develop it, let alone buy it.

Phil Wand

PCZ VERDICT

35%



Apparently, throwing spears at buildings causes them to blow up.

SEVEN KINGDOMS 2: THE FRYHTAN WARS

★ £39.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** P233, 64Mb and a 3D card

SK2 is an RTS which plunges the player into a fictitious world where humans battle it out with a race called the Fryhtans, whose main goal in life is to subjugate the whole of humanity.

You have the chance to take control of one of 12 human tribes (Romans, Egyptians and so on) or, if you're feeling evil, the Fryhtans themselves, and you can play in campaign, single game, scenario or multiplayer mode. After making these choices, it's off to the battlefield.

The game itself is incredibly detailed and, if you're patient enough to handle it, *SK2* can be a relatively rewarding experience, often reminiscent of

Civilization. Your empire's economy, happiness, army, diplomacy and trade are all in your hands – a task that's made all the more difficult when you're surrounded by enemies who want to wipe you out. New weapons and technologies must be researched before they can be built, and there's far more emphasis on espionage and counter espionage this time around. But the complexity of *SK2* can be intimidating and there's a danger that even the easiest of the five difficulty settings could make newcomers feel disillusioned and quickly give up the ghost.

Graphically, the game is a major improvement over its predecessor, using high resolutions and well-drawn sprites, but the sound effects are a bit lame – especially during combat. The AI is generally well implemented, but sometimes erratic.

One of the greatest disappointments is the lack of any real storyline. There's no excitement about seeing what happens next, and no desire to complete a tedious mission to see where it will lead. *Seven Kingdoms 2* will certainly appeal to fanatics of strategy and resource management, but it's neither enticing nor entertaining enough to recommend to anyone else.

Martin Korda

PCZ VERDICT

63%

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SEVEN KINGDOMS

THE FRYHTAN WARS

DESIGNED BY TREVOR CHAP



Create, Govern and Slay



Create a kingdom: submit towns, build an economy and watch your people prosper and grow.



Govern your lands: decide on diplomacy, collect taxes, raise a military, even command the might of the divine!



Slay your enemies, the monstrous and bloodthirsty Fryhtans, and unite your rivals under the single banner of your kingdom.



Hidden & Dangerous

Spec Ops

Delta Force



PCZ SUPERTEST MILITARY

"It is time to kill and maim! To play some military action games! We love fighting, guns and war! It's Supertest time – you know the score!" Drill sergeant: *Paul Mallinson*

⦿ L to R: Lt David 'Mad Dog' McCandless ⦿ Sergeant Mark 'Hamburger' Hill ⦿ Captain Richie 'Throat-Slitter' Shoemaker ⦿ Private Paul 'Potato-Peeler' Presley ⦿ Colonel Keith 'Snake Eyes' Pullin ⦿ Commander Paul 'Meat Pie' Mallinson.



Wargasm

Rainbow Six



ACTION GAMES

It's a fact of life that we all have a morbid fascination with war, weapons, tactics and fighting – whatever our moral standpoint on the subject. Most of us, when we were kids, loved to play 'war' with our friends. Pretend machine guns, explosions, bullet wounds – every facet of the harsh realities of war replicated in loving detail in the harmless recesses of our young imaginations. It was as if Paul Hardcastle and *N-n-n-nineteen* never mattered. Little did we realise at the time that decades down the line, we would be playing those same games again, only this time in the comfort of our own homes on a desktop PC.

Military action games are nothing new – we've been playing and enjoying them ever since Bruce Carver first gave *Beach Head* to the world on the ancient Commodore 64 – but the advent of fast PCs and 3D acceleration has delivered unprecedented realism to this previously laughable genre, and now a range of new, 'socially responsible' shoot 'em ups have been made available, bringing tactical, conventional warfare concepts to a whole new generation of grown-up children (ie us). Most pit the

← player against a realistic enemy in a realistic military setting, mixing advanced use of artificial intelligence with precise environment simulation. Some work well, while others fail.

In this month's Supertest, the PC ZONE team pick their best-of-the-best in a genre that's rapidly becoming overcrowded. This is what they said...

DELTA FORCE

Prez: Playing this game is like swimming in a pool of rat semen.

Mallo: What?!

Prez: Unpleasant for all concerned. It's the most overrated game I've ever come across. Frankly, it's awful.

Mallo: It looks dated already because of the voxels.

Macca: Yeah, but *Outcast* uses voxels, doesn't it?

Mallo: And look at that...

Macca: Voxels work from a distance, but when you get up close...

Mallo: Were the characters voxels too?

Prez: They're sort of a voxel-sprite combo.

Macca: You can't combine voxels and polygons, can you?

Prez: NovaLogic have sort of done it with *F-22 Lightning III* – they're mixing the usual 3Dfx 'wow!' with voxels. They're still hanging on to them.

Mallo: For me, the laughable feature of *Delta Force* was the terrible animation. The characters really give it 'high knees' when they run... I couldn't stop laughing when I first played it.

Prez: Everyone kept saying: "This is really cool – you can see for miles into the distance." You look

through a sniper's scope and the characters look like *Ant Attack* on the Spectrum!

Mallo: The gameplay itself was surprisingly simplistic.

Prez: It is. It's an arcade game in simulation colours. Everyone goes on about how it's a 'fantastic military sim' and it isn't.

Every mission is 'pick up a large gun, walk around in broad daylight wading in whenever anything comes towards you'.

Mark: It's like *Commando* in 3D.

Macca: Multiplayer *Delta Force* was good, though.

Prez: The only thing NovaLogic did well with this was the online game, on NovaWorld. It's the only thing this game has going for it.

Richie: I agree, it's very good, even if the game isn't. To be honest, though, playing *Delta Force* online is just like playing *Quake* in camouflage – it's not that involving and there isn't much teamwork.

Prez: That's the trouble, it could have been revolutionary if there was any organisation. The fact that you end up playing the game with 14-year-old Americans means there is none.

Mallo: This extends into the single-player game. You're supposed to be part of a crack team of killers, but you feel like you're on your own. There's little

teamwork worth mentioning.

Prez: The *Delta Force* is supposed to be the best of the best of the American Ranger corps – or whatever – but this game fails to simulate effective teamwork. What usually

happens is that your team-mates end up wandering off, doing their own thing. And they get killed really easily. There are no team orders, no team commands – none of the military structure you'd expect from it.

Macca: The AI is rubbish.

Prez: At most, you get a team of three. You march to the south, one marches to the east and the other marches to the west...

Mallo: That's ridiculous! They *should* stick together. The idea is that you're part of a *squad*. Working together for the good of the whole.

Macca: These kind of games are important landmarks in terms of technology. In order to do this kind of thing successfully, the AI has to be spot-on. If the AI fails, as has happened with *Delta Force*, then the whole thing falls flat on its face.

Richie: Macca's right – it's the AI that sets these games apart from your average first-person shooter.

Macca: They couldn't have done it two years ago because the AI just wasn't there.

Keith: *Delta Force* must do

"It's the most overrated game I've ever come across"

PREZZER SOILS HIS COPY OF *DELTA FORCE*



DELTA FORCE

You play a part in the US army's top secret special forces unit, *Delta Force*, in 40 sorties across five continents ranging from airfield takedowns in central Asia and clearing out South American cartels to stopping nuclear terrorism in northern Russia. Supports online play for up to 30 people on NovaWorld.

SCORE

PCZ #66, 74%

DEVELOPER

NovaLogic

PUBLISHER

NovaLogic

PRICE

£34.99



Volumetric pixels – as far as the eye can see.



Delta Force has its fans...



...But not at PC ZONE.





American version of events.

Richie: *Rainbow Six* is, of course, an international force.

Mallo: Is it?

Richie: Yep. Didn't you read the book?

Mallo: Nope. Can't read, won't read.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Macca: First off, *Hidden & Dangerous* is one of the buggiest games I think I've ever played in my life. Quite frankly, unbelievable.

Mallo: Prezz, you're nodding in agreement, but you gave it ninety-odd per cent. Why?

Prez: Because it's one of the best games I've ever played, ever.

Macca: When I first installed and played it I spent hours setting up all my blokes – this was before I realised there was an Auto Set-up option – and all their kit, then I went into the game, and went through the mission briefing, and when I finally got into the game, all my bloke did was stand up and lie down, stand up and lie down. I couldn't control him or anything. All that time I spent preparing for the mission was wasted because of this stupid bug.

Prez: Yeah, I came across that problem. Are you sure you didn't have a force feedback joystick plugged in?

Macca: No – I don't have a joystick.

Prez: Take 2 promised that all the bugs would be fixed by the time it was released. And they didn't fix 'em. However, I still maintain that it doesn't actually matter. There are some games that come along, as bugged as hell, with a really awkward control system, but they're just so playable that it doesn't matter. *Hidden & Dangerous* is one of those games. I'm playing the patched version at the moment – it's still very bugged but I still keep going back to it.

Keith: It seems that the bugs only rear their head when your soldiers have nothing to do. If there's something to shoot at, they're like dead-eyes – they'll get them every time. If there's nothing to do, they'll just spin around or crawl up a hill...

“Whoever decided to include an orchestral soundtrack deserves a medal”

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS IS MUSIC TO MALLO'S EARS

Prez: You have to micro-manage your team constantly. To avoid your men running around being arseholes, you have to constantly be in command of all four men. If you constantly give them 'hold fire' and 'follow me' commands, it starts working really well. The one feature that doesn't work is when you go to the map screen and start giving them orders – they get screwed up then.

Keith: There's always one soldier who seems to be slightly deaf as well. You issue commands, wander off, turn around and notice that you've only got two guys with you... The other one's off climbing a tree or something.

Mark: Maybe their hearing skill is a built-in stat.

Macca: They could have made much more of the actual characters. To me, the people you can choose from are all the same. Real characters should have a lot of physical differences – you know, fat ones, thin ones, all that. It would have made it much more movie-ish.

Prez: There's one character who looks just like Richie!

Macca: There's always one who looks like Richie.

Everyone: (Laughs)

Mallo: I love the control system. At first, I thought:

“What the hell's this?” It was totally different to the *Quake*

control style we're used to, but it works brilliantly. It feels much better than using keys in *Quake*.

Prez: Being able to move the torso is a plus.

Mallo: It's really intuitive. I love the way you can crouch and run at the same time.

Prez: When I first started playing *Hidden & Dangerous*, a friend of mine who's in the Norwegian army – a sniper, funnily enough – saw me playing it and couldn't believe how accurate it was. He was telling me that all the little things, such as the way they hold the weapons and the way they aim, are so spot on. The details have been well researched.



Hidden & Dangerous is set in World War II.



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

This third/first-person, WWII-based action game follows the exploits of a small team of Allied soldiers undergoing 23 dangerous undercover missions behind enemy lines. The game begins in 1941 and can be played through to the war's eventual completion in 1945. Stealth, good tactics and cunning are required to prevail.

SCORE	PCZ #79, 91%
DEVELOPER	Illusionworks
PUBLISHER	Take 2
PRICE	£34.99

H&D boasts superb atmosphere.

little cut-scenes. You get shot and it zooms out to show the person who killed you, it personalises the situation and you get this movie kind of feel. The atmosphere is well captured. **Keith:** There's this one level where you get to drive this half-track across a beach and it's almost as if you're in *Saving Private Ryan* – you get

with the Lancaster bomber? You have to wait for it to land, under fire, then get your blokes in and man the turrets to fight off the Germans. The variety in the missions is brilliant.

Keith: You run through Prague and there's the cathedral in the background chiming its bells. It just adds so much to the atmosphere, and you don't get that in a lot of games.

Richie: The variety in the missions is incredible – it's like *Guns Of Navarone*, *Kelly's Heroes* and *Saving Private Ryan* all rolled into one.

Mark: And one mission can keep you occupied for hours and hours. I played some levels over again because they were so good. You don't have to follow a set path, of course you have to achieve certain objectives to complete a level, but the map is more than wide enough to accommodate a number of different approaches.

Macca: One thing I have to add is that it's a disappointment multiplayer is only co-operative. I'd have liked some kind of

“It's unbelievable – a great adrenalin rush”

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS SUMMED UP BY KEITH

Richie: Is the Norwegian army bugged? Do they run off cliffs?

Mallo: Or climb trees for fun?

Everyone: (Laughs)

Mallo: The presentation as a whole is superb.

Prez: The mission briefings are superb.

Macca: It's a war film, basically. It's got the music, the doom and gloom and all the styling – nice



bullets whistling past you, mortars exploding inches away. You end up grabbing on to the mouse and just going for it as fast as you can. It's unbelievable – a great adrenalin rush.

Prez: What about the mission



Great tactical gameplay...



...But *Rainbow Six Gold* isn't the best-looking game here.



'versus mode', with one team holding down a base and another attacking.

Prez: Multiplayer *Hidden & Dangerous* is fun, but only if people know what they're doing and can work together and follow orders.

Mark: Multiplayer is even more buggy than single-player.

Macca: I suppose a lot of it relies on the fact that the sentries don't know that they're going to be attacked. It would be a different type of game if you were expecting the enemy.

Prez: *Rainbow Six* multiplayer has one team versus another and that works really well.

Keith: Another good thing in *Hidden & Dangerous* is the sound. You're walking down a quiet street and all of a sudden you hear "Hey, Tommy!" and suddenly you're under attack from all sides.

Mallo: The music is wicked. Whoever decided to include an orchestral soundtrack deserves a medal.

Macca: All games should be like that.

Mallo: *Wargasm* was the same. The swirling orchestral soundtrack just made it. It makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up.

Macca: Play the game on headphones – it's awesome.

RAINBOW SIX GOLD

Macca: Couldn't really get into it, I don't know why...

Mallo: Tom Clancy – complete nancy.

Everyone: (Laughs)

Macca: I think it was because the game erred on the side of strategy, rather than action. For

RAINBOW SIX GOLD

Rainbow Six is organised around a series of missions in which you must plan and execute precise assaults on terrorist installations. As your mission advances, you uncover a larger and more sinister conspiracy, where the fate of the world hangs in the balance. The Gold Pack comes complete with add-on.

SCORE	PCZ #81, 84%
DEVELOPER	Red Storm
PUBLISHER	Take 2
PRICE	£34.99

me, I wanna get into the fighting and down to ground level. What interests me is being less of a general and more of a foot soldier. You just didn't seem to get that from *Rainbow Six*.

Mallo: For me, there's too much faffing around setting up initially.

Prez: But that's what this game is all about – the planning. I can see why that wouldn't appeal to everyone, but I loved it. I got fed up with all the first-person shooters where you just run in and it's kill, kill, kill... I wanted something where I could sit down for a change and plan meticulously.

Mark: Although I wasn't really into the planning features in a major way, I really like *Rainbow Six*.

Richie: The team simulation is

what makes this game – it's handled really well. You've only got about four different orders, but they work perfectly. It's all down to timing. The map works brilliantly.

Keith: The team commands work better than in *Hidden & Dangerous*. You've got the Alpha command, which is where you tell everyone to 'go, go, go!' and on that signal your team pile in, kicking down doors and pouring into buildings.

Richie: In *Hidden & Dangerous* you've got four guys – hand-picked – taking on the might of the German army. In *Rainbow Six* you've got a team of 12...

Prez: Up to four teams of four.

Richie: Yeah. Against a handful of terrorists and yet you get whipped all the time. It doesn't quite feel right. The strategy side is definitely the best out of all the games here though. The graphics are a bit shit.

Macca: I'd agree with that.

Richie: Apart from the faces of your guys, which are really high resolution.

Prez: It looked very two-dimensional. It's a two-dimensional 3D game.

Macca: Some of the sound effects are ludicrous too. You step on gravel and it sounds like your feet are exploding...

Keith: A lot of the sound effects seem muffled as well.

Mallo: Can the enemy hear you moving around?

Macca: No. I got bored once and went around shooting my own blokes and there was no reaction from the terrorists or my other team-mates.

Mark: In *Rainbow Six* you can actually shoot at someone in a room and the terrorist next to him will not react at all. It's really weird, and really annoying.

Richie: The best use of sound is in *Spec Ops*, I think.

Prez: Trouble is, no one really thought of using sound in that way until *Thief* came along. That was the first game I saw where sound played an important

"The strategy side is definitely the best out of all the games here"

RICHELSON RAINBOW SIX

role in the gameplay.

Richie: *Spec Ops* came out before *Thief*... The whole of *Spec Ops* is quite dark, so the enemy are supposed to react to sound.

Keith: They do in *Hidden & Dangerous* as well. I've been in a silent situation, fired my gun and the enemy have swarmed towards me.

Richie: Yeah, they do, but in *Spec Ops* the enemy actually home in on you, whereas in *Hidden & Dangerous* you fire a shot and the Germans go: "Uh? Where did zat come from?"

Keith: I've been in situations in *Hidden & Dangerous* where I thought I was in a safe position only to be shot, have the camera spin round and show someone who's snuck up behind me.

Richie: Wouldn't it be good in something like *Hidden & Dangerous*, where you shoot someone, a siren goes off and suddenly hundreds of Germans come running at you?

Mark: That does happen! It's really scary when it does, but it does happen.

Prez: There are several missions in *Rainbow Six* where you've got all four teams in different positions, all waiting for the 'go' code, and you're just waiting for this one terrorist to go past, then you send everyone in and you can hear, from different parts of the building, shooting and grenades exploding, but you think "F**k, it's working! My plan's working!"



Richie: It makes you use your imagination. You can imagine what's happening, you don't have to watch it. It works very well on that level.

Keith: A lot of the suspense is taken away because you can always look at the map and see exactly where the terrorists are.

Prez: Only if you've got the motion sensor working. But you do have a bit of advanced knowledge about where they are, but then that's realistic.

Mark: It's good multiplayer.

Richie: Yeah, I played it quite a bit over the Internet and really liked it – the fact that you die and it's all

over, and everyone else carries on fighting...

Macca: What, you then spectate for the next half an hour?

Richie: No, they're only short, five-minute missions. But with these kind of games, you really need voice communication to play them properly.

Macca: It's gonna be in the next version of DirectX, Battlefield Communicator.

Richie: *Team Fortress II* – that's gonna be the one. It's gonna be amazing.

Macca: The future of these kind of games is going to be online armies, isn't it? Proper armies with their own hierarchical structures, grunts and generals, but in order to enforce a chain of command there's gotta be repercussions for people that betray it...

Mallo: Online court martials?

Macca: Yeah! Punishment beatings.

Everyone: (Pearly laughter)

Mallo: F**k up and your team-mates beat you with bars of soap wrapped in towels during the night.

Everyone: (Laughs)

Macca: Imagine, in *Team Fortress II*, when you've got a huge army and someone f**ks up and it scuppers the mission, you should be allowed to execute them. They should suffer some demotion or some punishment for failing. That would make it so much better – more realistic.

Mallo: That'll end up starting real wars again... Everyone should start out as a private and you've gotta prove yourself to rise up the ranks.

Prez: Would you have to make your bed?

Macca: The possibilities are endless.

Mallo: We haven't talked about the 'Digital Battlefield' yet.

Macca: Are we gonna use that phrase?

Mallo: You know –

you've got an F-22 simulator, a tank sim, and an infantry sim all working within the same game environment...

Prez: NovaLogic are already doing it with NovaWorld.

Mallo: What games, though?

Prez: *F-16* combining with *MIG 29*, and apparently a tank game soon.

Mallo: But they're all bloody flight sims!

Prez: *Armored Fist III* and – I think – *Delta Force 2* are going to be linked to it.

Macca: If you're a foot soldier, there's more room for your own personal skill with weapons – aiming, thinking and using the environment. That's what I enjoy most – using weapons and killing people.

Prez: We all want to kill. This is a justified way of doing it.

Macca: No, it's because of the skill involved. Some people are better than others because of the range of skills required.

Mallo: Yeah. Don't we just know it, Macca...

SPEC OPS: RANGER ASSAULT

Richie: I loved it. I just thought it was so original.

Mallo: I was put off from the word 'go'. I didn't like the graphics at all, the control system really pissed me off and I just didn't have the patience, at the time, to sit down and come to terms with it.

Richie: It came along at a time when there was little else like it. Okay, so there was no planning at all, but you had this guy on your side, wandering around with you,

which hadn't been done before. You could only give him three orders, but it worked really well.

Mallo: The best thing about this game was the atmosphere. Great use of lighting...

Richie: Light and dark worked really well. You could even take out a light source and use it to your advantage.

Macca: Is it all set in the jungle?

Richie: No. Vietnam, Russia, Afghanistan, Colombia... The other thing about *Spec Ops* is that when you get into it, you find it hard to stop playing. I completed it in three days and just couldn't stop playing it. On the downside, there was no multiplayer, and the AI was patchy, but it wasn't that bad. And once you'd completed it, you wouldn't play through it again. Good weapons...

Mark: No multiplayer – I mean, come on...



SPEC OPS: RANGER ASSAULT

In this military action game, you take control of a team of US Rangers on a number of realistic outdoor missions, including reprisal attacks, seize and destroy, hostage rescue, counter-terrorist attacks, and raid and destroy. The developers consulted with Special Forces Military Advisors on the design of the game.

SCORE	PCZ #65, 88%
DEVELOPER	Zombie
PUBLISHER	Take 2
PRICE	£9.99

Richie: There was a multiplayer feature in the add-on pack, but Take 2 didn't release it over here.

Mallo: That's ridiculous. What are Take 2 playing at? This and

“No multiplayer – I mean, come on...”

MARK ISN'T IMPRESSED WITH SPEC OPS' SHORTCOMINGS

Hidden & Dangerous – both bugged – and not releasing the add-on in the UK...

Keith: I can't see the fascination with *Spec Ops*...

Richie: I think the reason I liked it so much at the time was because it didn't have bloody aliens in it – it had proper guns, a proper setting – it was realistic.

Macca: Yeah, I'm sick of playing sci-fi games.

Mallo: It depends on the game, though. I know what you're saying and I empathise to a point, but

you've got to play *System Shock 2*. You can't just discount it because it's sci-fi.

Richie: If you look back to the Eighties and the games you remember, it's stuff like *Commando*, *Ikari Warriors* and *Green Beret*. I can't think of any side-scrolling sci-fi action games...

Mallo: You forgot *Cobra*.

Keith: What about *Starquake*?

Mallo: Yeah, what a game that was!

Richie: Okay, I'm talking out of my arse.

Macca: *Starquake* didn't scroll.

Mallo: What about *Zynapse*?

Macca: I was playing the new *Unreal* mission pack the other day thinking: "My God, this is *shit*," but once you get on to the ship and



you're running down corridors and stuff, it suddenly becomes really cool. Rather than being on an alien planet, which you can't relate to, you get to a location you can relate to and you get into it again. Real-life locations, without a doubt, are a much better gaming environment.

Mallo: What about *Outcast*? That plays quite similarly to a lot of the games here, and it was slated in *PC ZONE* for exactly that.

Macca: It was a very controversial review, wasn't it?

Mallo: I read the review, and have played the game, and I'm backing Charlie on this one. That kind of sci-fi bullshit technobabble has no grounding in the real world. It just doesn't interest me at all. I prefer grittier, more realistic sci-fi – like *System Shock 2* – rather than pathetic made-up worlds with names and phrases that are difficult to relate to and remember.

Prez: I disagree. I played the demo and got sucked in.

Mallo: There were aspects of *Outcast* that worked really well,



Spec Ops:
more action
than tactics.

Spec Ops: looking dated by today's standards?

FUTURE SORTIES

Scaring the nation with their guns and ammunition

The PC games-playing world is soon to go military action game crazy, it seems. Not only will we soon have hold of Valve's hugely anticipated *Team Fortress II* – a team-based tactical combat game with a potentially world-beating multiplayer element – but we should also see the arrival of *Delta Force 2* from NovaLogic (with built-in voice communication software), *Rogue Spear* from Take 2 (the follow-up to *Rainbow Six*), *Spec Ops II: Green Berets* (again, from Take 2), and a *Hidden & Dangerous* add-on pack, which the ubiquitous Take 2 have confirmed they are working on.

Apart from the usual sequels, a number of other development houses have caught on to the fact that these kind of games are rapidly becoming seriously fashionable in PC gaming circles and are producing games of their own in an attempt to grab a piece of the action. Digital Platoon's *Project V1* is already looking very smart (see www.digitalplatoon.com), as is TS Group's forthcoming *Private Wars* and Sierra's new *SWAT* game (number three in the series). As if they weren't enough, it looks like Westwood Studios are also about to enter the tactical military combat game arena with *C&C: Renegade* – a three-dimensional take on their ever-popular real-time strategy gaming franchise. Armchair soldiers have never had it so good!



Delta Force 2 looks just like... Delta Force 1.



Get ready for Spec Ops II: Green Berets.



Project V1 from The Digital Platoon.



Shoot cars in the forthcoming Private Wars.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

They may be old, but are they gold?

The first game ever to attempt to recreate the concept of infantry warfare on the PC platform was Electronic Arts' ancient *Seal Team* (PCZ #7, 77%) – a little-known Vietnam-based ground combat sim with DOS-based, VGA polygonal graphics, released in 1991. At the time, *Seal Team* had its fans, but no one saw it as an opportunity to expand on a good idea, and the game unfortunately sank without trace. After that, there is little else to shout about, except for maybe Sensible Software's *Cannon Fodder* (an overhead military combat game that proved more playable on the Commodore Amiga than on the PC), and *Airborne Rangers* from MicroProse. It just goes to show how original Take 2's *Spec Ops* actually was when it graced our screens last year.



War had never been so much fun... Sensible Software's Cannon Fodder, now looking a tad dated.



Released way back in 1991, EA's Seal Team was the precursor to many of the games featured here.

← the presentation, especially – but imagine if they'd used their technology to create a game with a real-world setting. It would have been so much better. As for *Outcast*'s story holding the game together – forget it. I'm just not interested.

Prez: I tend to find that the people who didn't like *Outcast* preferred action games and didn't want to play adventure games any more. I come from an adventure game background – I like stories, I like talking, I like interaction.

Mark: I like adventure games, but I was bored stiff by *Outcast*.

Macca: We're getting off the subject here, but real-life locations – that's what everybody wants. I want to see a first-person shooter, in the vein of *Half-Life*, set in the First/Second World War. **Keith:** You'll be asking for smell-o-vision next. Demanding the smell of napalm and rotting dead bodies...

Macca: Hey, that's not a bad idea.

Richie: Just don't wash for two weeks.

Everyone: (Laughs)

Macca: So... *Spec Ops*, then?

Richie: You can't go wrong for a tenner.

Keith: Just doesn't cut it now.

Richie: It's not a tactical game –

complicated and cumbersome.

Macca: The AI is shit, again.

Richie: The levels are repetitive.

Mallo: I can't believe what I'm hearing! I didn't spot any particularly bad AI. Some of the levels are a bit samey, but there are loads of surprises – especially later on in the game.

Macca: I'd tell my troops to do something simple, like move from A to B, and they would just not turn up. They would simply get distracted or go off somewhere else.

Mallo: Your AI-controlled forces have to have some autonomy – otherwise, they'd just sit there and take enemy fire without reacting. In the heat of battle, it can sometimes be difficult to follow exactly what's going on, but *Wargasm* provides you with all the info you need to keep on top of it. It's down to you then. If you can't keep track of your troops, then that's your problem...

Prez: It's another glorified arcade game.

Mallo: They all are! For heaven's sake...

Macca: *Wargasm* also has pretensions to be a real-time strategy game.

Mallo: It was trying to simulate

“It's just *Tron* all over again!”

MACCA DOESN'T RATE WARGASM AT ALL



the aforementioned 'Digital Battlefield' concept – what did DID call it?

Prez: EBT – the Electronic Battlefield of Tomorrow.

Mallo: That's it.

Prez: Before *Wargasm* came out, I remember me and Mallo being shown an early version of the game, and back then it was a tank sim.

Mallo: Yeah, a full-on simulation. And it looked amazing. Martin Kenwright (*DID head honcho* – Ed) was saying [in Scouse accent]:

“Not quite sure what we're gonna do with this one, lads...” We just looked at him and said: “It's gotta be an arcade game,” mainly because it looked so good, we didn't want to see it ‘wasted’ on hardcore sim heads. And they made it into one.

Prez: Which was probably a mistake.

Richie: Jesus Christ!

Prez: What do we know?!

Mallo: I like *Wargasm* – a lot. It wasn't what I was expecting from DID, but they set out to make an enjoyable military action game and succeeded.

it's an action game. It's more of a simulation than something like *Quake*, but it's not as tactical as any of the others here. It's much better than *Delta Force*, though.

Keith: The soldiers don't even look like soldiers. They look like tramps pottering around a GM food plantation.

Mallo: They look like they've got their socks tucked into their boots and have filled their trousers full of shit. But I digress...

WARGASM

Mallo: Wicked music. Fantastic music. Great atmosphere.

Richie: Why not go and buy the music CD from HMV?

Macca: It's a terrible game.

Mallo: It's not a terrible game! You can play as infantry, armour or as a helicopter.

Macca: It's too much.

Richie: The controls for the infantry guy are far too

Macca: It does get really f**king mad. You get loads of things happening and kicking around the screen – there are loads of explosions going on...

Mallo: Superb explosions, too.

Macca: Visually, it was amazing.

Prez: I suppose the reason it's in this Supertest is because of the troop element of the game. Quite frankly, though, it didn't work.

Mallo: The reason it's here is because it fits into the modern military catchment of this Supertest. What about multiplayer? Did anyone here play it? It is a good laugh.

Prez: Me and Charlie played it and, yeah, it was a good laugh, but that's all it was.

Keith: The physics engine was great – no one's mentioned that yet.

Prez: The tanks bouncing over hilltops... It was very good.

Keith: But the gameplay itself is just like *Battlezone*. There are no real tactics involved.

Mark: It felt more like *MechWarrior* – you just go round shooting things.

Mallo: I disagree. You don't just steam in straight ahead – you do have to plan tactically. You can use cover, cliffs and stuff. You can use high ground to increase range...

Mark: If you're a foot soldier you have to adjust your run speed as if you were driving a tank.

Prez: Yeah, you've got a speed gauge on your foot soldier!

Macca: And it had a sci-fi plot to it – I hate that shit.

Mallo: Actually, the whole thing is

supposed to take place inside a computer...

Prez: The World Wide War Web, or something like that...

Macca: It's just *Tron* all over again!

Mallo: Anyone got anything good to say about *Wargasm*?

Macca: No, it was bollocks.

Everyone: (Laughs)

Mallo: It's worth a look, especially on budget.

Richie: If they'd have designed *Wargasm* as an online-only game from the outset, and added to it – different troops, personnel carriers, planes, 'copters – it could have been amazing. It could have been the *Ultima Online* of military action games.

Prez: That's what they were gonna do.

Mallo: But didn't. Oh well... **PCZ**

WARGASM

Bridging the gap between first-person combat, vehicle and helicopter simulation, *Wargasm* lets you fight from the air, on foot or in a tank in a simulated environment that's contained within the World Wide War Web – a futuristic battleground that has brought about the end of real war.

SCORE

PCZ #79, 92%

DEVELOPER

DID

PUBLISHER

Ocean

PRICE

£14.99

Wargasm: DID's first all-out action game.

Military action mayhem.

Be a soldier, a tank or a helicopter.

AND THE WINNER IS...

Take 2 game sweeps up top spot in **PC ZONE** Supertest – shock, horror!

Some of you may have noticed that Take 2 seem to be leading the pack when it comes to this kind of game – not only have they published three of the five games featured in this Supertest, but they are also releasing a number of exciting additions to the genre over the coming months.

And, for the time being at least, Take 2 have the best tactical military action game available for the PC – *Hidden & Dangerous*.

Despite being, as Macca put it, "one of the buggiest games of all time", *Hidden & Dangerous* has the qualities of an all-time classic. Mark Hill reckons: "It's the game that comes the closest to the feeling you get when you're playing war as a kid – running around,

pretending to shoot people. There's nothing that comes close to it." Macca maintains it's "design genius", and that it "paves the way for a whole new genre". Prezza is still elated that it "makes you think hard about what you're doing". So, overall, a massive hit from out of nowhere, and one that will undoubtedly be remembered for some time to come.

As for the rest of the bunch, *Rainbow Six Gold* is still a tempting prospect for the armchair mercenary. "If you've just completed *Hidden & Dangerous* and want more of that kind of thing, go out and buy *Rainbow Six Gold*," says Richie. He says the same about *Spec Ops: Ranger Assault*, and who are we to argue? "Ya'll got the guns."

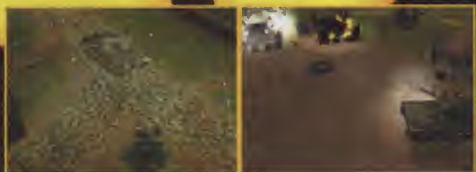
OVERALL WINNER



Big bangs for the bucks: *Hidden & Dangerous* takes top honours.

YOUR TEAM HAS BEEN
DROPPED DEEP BEHIND
ENEMY LINES ON A
MERCENARY CONTRACT JOB...
YOU'VE SUFFERED
HORRENDOUS LOSSES...
YOU'VE RETREATED TO
THE PICK-UP POINT...
BUT THERE'S NO CHOPPER,
AND A MESSAGE STATING -
"YOUR UNIT HAS BEEN DEFUNDED".
YOU'RE IN TROUBLE...

...IT'S PAYBACK TIME!



SHADOW

- The game is **entirely in 3D**, with **high quality graphics**.

A very detailed terrain, the great sound environment and the character animations make the experience immersive, close to **watching a movie**.

- Determine **your own strategy**: there is no set way to accomplish each mission, that's left for you to decide. Go in with guns blazing or carefully pick the guards one by one?
- Take control of **up to twelve mercs at a time**, each with their own weapon preferences and **detailed skills**, but also personality and background.
- Intuitive gameplay** allows to easily perform **spectacular feats**: creep up behind guards unnoticed, ambush patrols and generally wreak unseen havoc upon your enemies.
- 9 vast campaigning areas**, each with multiple objectives for **dozens of realistic missions** overall.
- The team has a **wide array of weapons and equipment** to help them in their tasks, such as assault rifles, sniping rifles, explosives, tools, etc.

SHADOW COMPANY LEFT FOR DEAD



UNLEASHED SEPTEMBER 1999

Ubi Soft web site: www.ubisoft.co.uk



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BUDGET ZONE

We know what it's like to be skint, looking at the latest full-price releases and crying into your empty wallet. Take a look at this month's deals on wheels

★ RACING TO THE SHOPS Mark Hill



The best rally game ever finally reaches budget.

COLIN MCRAE RALLY

★ £14.99 • Codemasters Classics • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P120 Memory 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** Sounds about right

PCZONE CLASSIC It's no wonder *Colin McRae Rally* caused such a stir when it was released last summer, achieving enormous sales figures as well as critical praise. A year later, it's still the best rally simulation available and one of the finest racing games of all time. With news of the forthcoming sequel making all armchair drivers clap their sweaty little paws in anticipation, it's the perfect moment to release the first title on budget. It's true that the only reason we know anything about rally racing is because there's a Brit that's good at it, and it has nowhere near the same popularity or media coverage as Formula One. But what would you rather do – go round in circles over a grey tarmac like some idiotic wind-up toy, or race around the world, through jungles, snowy landscapes and craggy mountains? Exactly.

If you're new to the world of frenetic steering wheel swinging and last-minute corner handbraking, there's a useful rally school taught by the big man himself. It goes all the way from driving in a straight

line (well, you try doing it after a few pints) to advanced driving techniques. Once you hit the championship proper, there are eight cars to drive over 50 world stages, and they're all exceedingly good-looking. The backgrounds are detailed and the cars move smoothly and gradually get covered in mud. Each vehicle handles so beautifully you'll wonder how driving could ever be this much fun, even if you're on your own every inch of the way.

Instead of bashing into other cars, you are kept up to date on your position in the overall race every time you pass an invisible checkpoint. This works surprisingly well, and at no stage do you feel as if there is something missing, especially since you are aided by co-driver Nicky Grist at all times, who advises you of what kind of turns to expect ahead. If you don't have *Colin McRae Rally*, get it now. We promise you the drive of your life.

PCZVERDICT

92%

TOCA: TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

★ £12.99 • Codemasters • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P100 Memory 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** A P166 with 32Mb RAM and a 3D card

PCZONE RECOMMENDED The second of Codemasters' budget racing releases, *TOCA* originally came out more than half a year before *Colin McRae Rally* and, despite sharing the same graphics engine, there are some major differences. To begin with, the cars are a lot blockier and harder to handle. The emphasis is very much on simulation, so you won't be able to turn round corners at top speed and it's all too easy to build up a nice lead only to steer slightly off the track and go straight into last place. At the same time there are distinct arcade features, such as the way you unlock tracks through building up points (you can only race in two of the nine to begin with), the incentive of bonus cars and the possibility of knocking other cars off the tarmac. This is definitely the lesser of the two racers, but still well worth a look, this is the one to go for if you don't mind slightly dodgy graphics, going round in circles and swearing a lot.

PCZVERDICT

81%



A familiar scene, right at the back trailing behind everyone else.



Weather effects are specially effective.



Theme Football Stadium, anyone?



The latest graphics technology has passed this game by.



Most stats are out of date. Except for Man Utd's.

ULTIMATE SOCCER MANAGER 98

£12.99 • Havas • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P75 Memory 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** A P133

USM 98 wasn't the finest of challengers to the football managing crown when it first came out, but it performed remarkably well in the charts. Allowing you to coach in the English, Spanish, Italian German, French and Scottish leagues, this is one of those 'theme soccer' sims where you get to tweak everything from the prices of hot dogs and pies to the length of your players' shoelaces.

As always, you can choose to concentrate solely on the football aspect and delegate all other responsibilities. And, unless you're a Business Studies undergraduate, that's exactly what you'll do. Even so, finding your way around isn't as easy as it should be, with the

squad screen just one of many, including your office, the training ground and the fish 'n' chip shop. The actual footballing side of things isn't particularly involving or, if you're used to *Championship Manager* standards, realistic. Transfers, team selection and tactics are only slightly more interesting than the laughable match simulation, which is especially funny when played at eight times the normal speed. But *USM 98* really does draw you into creating a tangible world away from the pitch, with features such as journalists' questions after a match, and an office with newspapers, teletext, email and fax. So if you're after the ultimate media manager, this is it.

PCZVERDICT

62%



Flip Out!: Colourful! Boring! Affordable!

FLIP OUT!

★ £4.99 • Sold Out • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor 486 Memory 8Mb RAM **WE SAY** A flippin' P90 with 16Mb RAM

In a market obsessed with state-of-the-art graphics and technological advances, it's always refreshing to find a *Tetris* or *Puzzle Bobble* that eschews everything in the name of simple yet addictive gameplay. Unfortunately, for every one of those classics there's a *Flip Out!*. The idea behind the game is to get a set of tiles into a predetermined pattern by, you guessed it, flipping them in the air. What this means in practice is a confusing mass of tiles flying all over the screen, which forces you to concentrate on a set of two-dimensional squares on the ground. Hardly riveting. Because gameplay is based around completing levels rather than notching up the highest score possible while trying to cope with a frantic increase of speed, there isn't the sense of challenge associated with the best PC puzzle titles. Add to that the absence of a two-player frenzy and you're left with a forgettable little game with stupid fat aliens and colourful backgrounds.

Well, what more do you expect for a fiver?

PCZVERDICT

50%



Broken Sword: adventure games are thin on the ground, so you might want to give it a go.

BROKEN SWORD

★ £4.99 • Sold Out • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor 486 Memory 8Mb RAM **WE SAY** P90 with 16Mb RAM

A lot of great American writers have visited Paris this century: Henry Miller, Ernest Hemmingway, F Scott Fitzgerald, George Stobart... Actually, that last one is the character you play in this 'not quite classic' point-and-click adventure set in the French capital. His literary style is not exactly in the same league as those mentioned above, either. "She asked the question innocently, but I could sense her reserve. It was something which seemed to afflict all Europeans" is just one example from his grating catalogue. As he repeats his immortal line "I'm an American" for the eighty-seventh time, you'll find yourself putting him at the top of your 'To Kill' list, right after Jar Jar Binks. It's a shame really, because the premise of an adventure game that pulls you into a centuries-old mystery involving Templars is an intriguing one. The trashy novel narrative, the unbearable stereotypes and annoying voices do get in the way, but with adventures so thin on the proverbial ground, and coming at such an affordable price, you might want to give it a try.

PCZVERDICT

65%

FEEDBACK

Overseeing a busy month of debate in the world of PC games is ZONE's very own referee, Keith Pullin

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in PC ZONE over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO Feedback, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ

E-MAIL Alternatively, e-mail them to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with 'Feedback' in the subject line.

“What a game! It's the only game I can remember playing that has left me physically drained after three hours' play. Go buy!”

'THE BUTLER' CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Last month's less than flattering review of *Outcast* provoked such a spirited backlash we decided it should be reviewed again – by you. We've pieced together two reviews (one positive and one negative) using your comments.

OUTCAST

REVIEWED Issue 80, September
SCORE 62%

What we thought
“There's no sense of immediacy or excitement. Bottom line: it's boring.”

Readers' comments – positive

★ “*Outcast* is one of the best games ever. Considering there's no 3D acceleration, the graphics are fantastic – just look at the way the sky reflects off the rippling water: it's nothing short of stunning. The gameplay is incredibly involving, with real characters to identify with, loads of missions and a huge non-linear world that makes *Zelda* look like it was made in about a week. The weapons are great, the control system is surprisingly clever, the conversations are well managed (if a little long – but you can skip them if necessary), and the AI is excellent.

“There's just so much you can do, and in so many different ways. Put simply, the positive aspects of *Outcast* far outweigh the negative ones. If you want a totally immersive and original game with action, adventure and a fair degree of brain power, you won't find anything better. Fact.”

Readers' comments – negative

★ “Don't buy *Outcast* – at least not until some patches have been released. If you've got a high-specification PC you'll encounter all sorts of bizarre configuration problems. The only way I could get it to work was to set the colour palette to 2-bit colour.

“Sadly, when it does finally decide to run, it's fair to say the whole experience is heartily disappointing. The voxel graphics are pants; like *Delta Force* they are far too pixelated up close. The movement is also extremely sluggish – even on a P450.

“The combat is long and arduous, and aiming a pistol is quite frankly a joke. The alien language is utterly boring and grating, which usually means you end up skipping huge chunks of dialogue, and subsequently not understanding what the hell is going on. The language is supposed to promote a feeling of

authenticity, but if that's the case, why can the aliens understand Cutter perfectly?”

“There must be some good points to this game – it's just having the inhuman patience to find them.”

Charlie's response

Looks like *Outcast* is the gaming equivalent of Marmite: some love it, some hate it. There doesn't appear to be much middle ground. What did surprise me was the vehemence of the backlash from the *Outcast* fan club: I was accused of everything from “journalistic sloth” to, well, to things I can't repeat in this small space without drawing an explicit diagram for reference purposes. However, no matter how much some of you loved the damn thing, I stand by every word I wrote. Sorry. I just found it boring and disappointing, a wasted opportunity – it actually annoyed me, and the style of the piece reflected that. To those who were offended, hey, at the end of the day, it's only my opinion – there's no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ about it. I also hate Country and Western music, baked beans, and *Casualty*. You might love all those things. Horses for courses, horses for courses.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

REVIEWED Issue 79, August
SCORE 91%

What we thought

PCZONE CLASSIC “Each mission is only as good as the people playing it.”

What you think

★ “I have to agree with Duncan Wardle's comments regarding *Hidden & Dangerous* (Feedback, PCZ #80). Though great fun to play, it does have a nice little collection of glitches. When restoring a save game, crouching men do indeed hover mystically above the ground. If you save in a car, you are likely to return to find your troops' heads poking up

“Having just bought *Descent 3*, I would advise anyone thinking about doing the same to go for the game it mimics: *Forsaken*”

SONY CRYSTALSON THINKS HE'S WASTED HIS MONEY

through the roof. Men's legs can and will disappear (relive those horrific opening scenes from *Saving Private Ryan*... oh yes!), and troops can fall flailing through the scenery to die in a strange blue dimension that awaits us all outside the confines of the map.

“You jokingly suggested that Mr Wardle might be playing the demo version (oh... my sides! Stop it!), but a friend of mine who also bought the program confirms all these faults. Maybe it's you who's playing the demo?”

Phil Mariott

★ “What a damn shame. Why couldn't Illusion Softworks have waited a few more months to complete *Hidden & Dangerous*? It's still a playable game, if mightily frustrating due to the plethora of bugs, yet it could so easily have been game of the year.

“Personally, I think all software ‘marketing’ departments should let the writers/programmers do their jobs properly.”

Ivor Wilson

★ “What a game! To think I almost didn't buy it. They've got everything right. I fail to understand how this game got less than *Half-Life* or *Quake II* – it's boiling over with atmosphere and is the only game I remember playing that has left me physically drained after three hours' play. Best game ever – go buy! Must play it again...”

The Butler

★ “Perhaps you ought to check out Talonsoft's website where they've had so many complaints from disgruntled Brit buyers, they've disowned the game. They're claiming that the UK release has nothing to do with them and that the US version will have all the bugs fixed. This suggests that we've been set up as unpaid beta testers (again).”

Nik H

Comment

After further and intensive play of *Hidden & Dangerous* we completely agree with any intelligent criticism directed at bugs in what is otherwise a truly superb game. You'll find a



Okay, so not all of you agree with our review of *Outcast*, but can we please consider the subject closed?



Midtown Madness: hours of pure anarchic fun.

patch that corrects most of the problems on last month's cover disc (PCZ #81), but some kind of apology and explanation from Talonsoft as to why the game was released in such a state would be appreciated.

MIDTOWN MADNESS

REVIEWED Issue 79, August
SCORE 90%

What we thought

PCZONE CLASSIC "Midtown Madness is anarchic fun, plain and simple, as well as being on the right side of challenging."

What you think

★ "This game is superb. I've only been playing it for a couple of days and I've already worn the CD out! It's a bit slow on a P166MMX with 16Mb RAM though, so it might be worth boosting your capacity."

Andrew Sawers

★ "Midtown Madness is an incredibly cool game and I think it was well reviewed. However, there are a few problems: for a start, why are the police so incredibly stupid? They drive into walls while chasing you, and if you stop they just wait for you to start driving again without arresting you. And another thing: if you try to drive legally, the civilians will either drive into you or skid out of the way and yell 'maniac'. Apart from that, it's great."

Gus

Comment

AI can always be construed as a problem, and is something most developers are really focusing on at the moment. However, if the police had been made more intelligent wouldn't that have made the game less realistic?

DESCENT 3

REVIEWED Issue 79, August
SCORE 87%

What we thought

PCZONE RECOMMENDED "An extremely polished affair, with wide-screen cut-scenes tying the action together, giving it a dramatic cinematic feel."

What you think

★ "I've just bought *Descent 3* and am very disappointed. The graphics aren't anything special, and little is offered in the way of long-term gameplay. I would advise anyone thinking about buying this game to go for the game it mimics: *Forsaken*."

Sony Crystalson

★ "Sorry, but I'm slightly confused as to what exactly warrants a good score in your magazine. As far as I can tell, any game boasting big 3D-accelerated explosions is an instant hit – like *Descent 3* for example. Apparently the mark it received (87%) is just three per cent short of a Classic. Don't make me laugh! This is one of the most repetitive and mindless

games I've played in years. Frankly, I've had more fun on a bouncy castle.

"Sort it out, please. We're the ones suffering."

Ray Howe

Comment

Mr Howe, we're sorry you feel that way, but *Descent 3* is one of the best games of its kind. It seems clear that your gaming satisfaction probably lies away from the FPS genre.

TA: KINGDOMS

REVIEWED Issue 78, July
SCORE 94%

What we thought

PCZONE CLASSIC "As befits a game with *Total Annihilation* in its moniker, the interface of *Kingdoms* is a true work of art."

What you think

★ "This is definitely not 'the strategy game of the year'. You say you should keep playing it until you get into it, but I've played a quarter of the whole game and I'm still bored. Shouldn't 'the strategy game of the year' be fun

right from the start, like *StarCraft*, *Populous: The Beginning* and *Dungeon Keeper 2*?"

Mike Davis

★ "I've progressed to level 43 within the game and agree with your comments and ratings. I think it's a great game and am hoping Cavedog will release a patch to sort out the slow-down problem."

Gazz

Comment

The strategy game of the year should be about strategy, which is exactly what *Kingdoms* is all about.

KINGPIN

REVIEWED Issue 77, June
SCORE 92%

What we thought

PCZONE CLASSIC "Taking to your neighbours' heads with a lead pipe is no guarantee of success – although it is a lot of fun."

What you think

★ "Utter disappointment. Forget the full game if you've played the demo because you've already played the best part – the rest of it is virtually the same. That aside, multiplayer is a lot more fun. There's something about a player in flames that gives you a warm glow inside."

Dean White

★ "This game is bloody amazing! It's truly the best-looking FPS to date, even better than *Half-Life*, although it doesn't have such an intricate storyline. The multiplayer game grabs you from the very start. Anyone with 35 pounds burning a hole in their pocket should rush out and buy this brilliant title now."

Steve Hornby

★ "Kingpin is absolutely incredible in every sense. The graphics, the lighting, the AI... Everything is perfect – especially the violence. Limbs go missing, as does the occasional head, and foul language cascades everywhere. It's the most fun I've ever had. If you don't own *Kingpin*, I suggest that you go out and buy it this second."

Rob Blake

Comment

We're surprised you find it boring, Dean. That's not a criticism levelled at the game often.

BREAKNECK

REVIEWED Issue 78, July
SCORE 89%

What we thought

PCZONE RECOMMENDED "Breakneck must rank as one of the best-looking racing games we've seen."

What you think

★ "You guys have completely lost it. Your so-called *Breakneck* review wasn't a review at all. You waffle on about the graphics and cars, and a bit on 'Eddie', without a single word about the gameplay. What exactly was it that made it worth 89%? You don't say because you don't know. You've reviewed a running demo, haven't you? Just to get an exclusive. Tits."

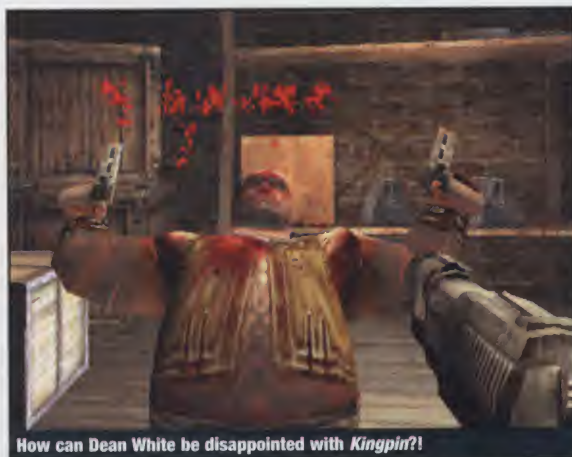
Andrew Whittaker

Comment

If that's what you think, then why the hell do you bother reading the magazine? We gave *Breakneck* 89 per cent because it is without doubt one of the slickest racing games around. We still play it now, and I bet you do too. Tit. [X]



Descent 3: Ray Howe reckons he's had more fun on a bouncy castle.



How can Dean White be disappointed with Kingpin?!

Have I been you somewhere before?



quanticdream

Featuring an original soundtrack by
David Bowie and Reeves Gabrels

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IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

114 CHEATMASTER

If at first you don't succeed... cheat. Allow Keith Pullin to show you how it's done.

115 DEAR KEITH

We know how frustrating it is to get stuck on a game. Which is why Keith Pullin's here to provide some answers.

116 HOW TO...

Want to upgrade your PC, but don't know your RAM from your ROM? Tim Ponting guides you through the techie maze.

122 DUNGEON KEEPER 2

Want to be the bestest, evilest Dungeon Keeper of them all? Satan's little helper, Keith Pullin, leads the wicked way.

126 HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Desperately trying to win World War II, but failing miserably? Well, don't pack up your troubles in your old kit bag - let ZONE show you how.

130 DEAR WAZZA

Need a hand with a technical query that's bugging you? Our tech-head Wazza is here to help.

132 WATCHDOG

Not satisfied with the service you've received? Pissed off with being fobbed off? Allow PC ZONE's Ann Robinson, Adam Phillips, to take up your case and twist some corporate knickers.

YOUR HOSTS



Warren Christmas



Keith Pullin



Adam Phillips



Phil Wand



Mark Hill



Tim Ponting

CHEAT MASTER

If cheats and codes tickle your fancy, get ready to start munching on some of these rather tasty morsels...

★ CHEATMEISTER Keith Pullin

ON THE CD



ON THE CD

We've got more than 1200 games tips and solutions squeezed on to this month's free cover CD for you. Check out the Editorial section of your CD-ROM browser to track them down.

NEED HELP?

If your problem's game-related, get organised and...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/CheatMaster, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ

EMAIL letters.pzone@dennis.co.uk with 'Dear Keith' or 'CheatMaster' in the subject line.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION KINGDOMS

Cavedog

After starting a skirmish or multiplayer game, press Enter to bring up the message box. Type "+", then one of these codes followed by Enter again:

atm	Maximum mana
bigbrother	Different script
cdstart	Toggle music on/off
combustion	All enemies die
dither	Dithering instead of line of sight
doubleshot	Double damage weapons
fogcolor [1-256]	Change fog colour
halfshot	Half damage weapons
ilose	Lose game
infrared	Toggle fog of war on/off
iwin	Win game
kill #	Kill player #
lotsablood	More blood
lushee	Limited resource increase
meteor	Random meteor shower
nanolathing	Nanolathing and

	metal usage doubled
noenergy	No energy
nometal	No metal
nowise	Full map
radar	100% radar coverage
shareradar	Share radar info
shootall	Target all enemies
sing	Units sing
tilt	Maximum men and material
view #	View player # metal and energy
zipper	Faster unit building

Select Any Mission: type in "drdeath" on the one-player game menu to see a Cavedog Entertainment bone. Click it to select any mission in the game.

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

Bullfrog

You'll find a comprehensive walkthrough of Bullfrog's brilliant strategy game in this very issue. However, due to an overload of information we've got to put the cheats here. So press Ctrl, Alt and 'C' during the game, then type these codes exactly as they appear here:

show me the money	Gives gold
now the rain has gone	Remove fog of war
feel the power	All monsters are instantly raised to level 10
this is my church	Choose from all rooms
fit the best	Choose from all rooms and traps
i believe it's magic	Choose from all spells
do not fear the reaper	Automatically win level

You can also change monsters into other races by sacrificing them at the temple. Here's how:

Sacrifice	Result
2 Salamanders	1 Dark Mistress
2 Rogues	1 Salamander
2 Warlocks	1 Goblin
2 Bile Demons	1 Rogue
2 Black Knights	1 Vampire
1 Salamander +	
1 Dark Elf	1 Dark Mistress
2 Skeletons	1 Dark Elf
2 Wizards	1 Bile Demon
1 Skeleton +	
1 Troll	1 Bile Demon
2 Dark Elves	1 Troll
2 Vampires	1 Bile Demon
2 Dark Mistresses	1 Skeleton
2 Trolls	1 Warlock
3 Monks	Mana boost
1 Bile Demon +	
1 Warlock +	
1 Dark Elf	Receive Imps

You can also load any level in the game:

Start 'dk2.exe' with the parameter -level (level name eg dk2.exe -level level10). Browse through the DK2DIR\DATA\EDITOR\MAPS directory for more info.

QUAKE III: ARENA (TEST)

id Software

For these cheats to work, the server must create a game with cheats enabled, for example, "devmap q3test1". Now bring up the console and choose from these fairly standard cheats:

God	God Mode
give gauntlet	Get gauntlet
give machinegun	Get machinegun
give shotgun	Get shotgun
give grenade launcher	Get grenade launcher
give rocket launcher	Get rocket launcher
give lightning gun	Get lightning gun
give railgun	Get rail gun
give plasma gun	Get plasma gun

give bfg10k Get BFG10K
give all Get all weapons
 and grappling
 hook
give grappling hook Get grappling
 hook
give health Get health
give armor Get armour
give quad damage Get quad-
 damage
give personal teleporter
 Get personal
 teleporter
give ammo Get ammo

steve reeves Powerful troops
bucks fizz Troops retreat
bastille day All walls breached
haemorrhage Blood disabled
killicam Removes camera

DESCENT 3

Interplay

Going down in Descent 3?

We'll stop the rot this minute by
 accessing the in-game console
 and typing these codes for an
 easier ride:

burgergod God mode
ivegotit Full weapons, energy,
 and shields
moreclang Level jump
treesquid Full map
deadofnight Destroy all bots
testicus Cloaking device
framelength Display frame rate
byebyemonkey Chase view
shananigans Strange level
 textures
tuberacer 210 damage
teletubbies Teletubbies sun

BRAVEHEART

Eidos Interactive

Forget bravery – go for
 sheer skulduggery. In 3D
 mode, press DEL and type
 these codes:

sesquipidillan AI cheats enabled
bannockburn Kill all enemies
the five hundred Kill your own troops
dresden Set fire to all
 buildings

MECHWARRIOR 3

Hasbro Interactive

If you're finding this robot sim
 heavy going, try the following:

Disable overheating

If you're piloting a Mech that
 shuts down or explodes when
 performing an alpha strike, press
 the 'F' key as soon as you've
 performed the strike to stop your
 Mech shutting down.

Salvaging

Group a lot of medium pulse
 lasers together and concentrate
 your fire on one leg of an enemy
 Mech. This should immobilise the
 Mech and make it easily
 salvageable.

Watch a video

Watch any of the in-game videos
 by going into the Video folder on
 the MechWarrior 3 CD.

DELTA FORCE

NovaLogic

We printed a host of cheats


for this soldiering romp a
 few months back. Since
 then some new information
 has been brought to our
 attention. So just press '~' to
 activate the console and type
 these codes:

closetoyou Become invisible to the
 enemy
letmego Level select
sky Reduces sky details
 (speeds up the game)

MOTORACER 2

Electronic Arts

Motoracer 2 may be getting
 on a bit, but we receive many
 a plea for cheats. So type
 these codes during the game
 and your troubles will be
 nothing but a small speck of
 dirt on the track:

cdnalsi Opens all tracks
cesrever Extra tracks – access at
 main menu
ctekcop Turbo bikes 

CALL OUR
**TIPS
 LINE**

**0207
 917 7698**

THURS 1.30PM–5.30PM



Richard
 Crook here
 will answer
 any question
 you have.
 Possibly

Email us for a quick response:
Tipszone@hotmail.com

DEAR KEITH

Send your troubles to Keith Pullin and he'll put your gaming world back in order...

DOCKERS STRIKE

Q I'm playing *Discworld Noir* and I can't
 get anywhere at all. I just keep
 wandering backwards and forwards
 between my office and the wharf. Clearly,
 I'm quite thick, but could you brush aside
 your abuse and give me a few clues to
 help me on my way?

Emily Baines

A Visit the wharf and chat with the
 first mate about The Milka's
 passengers, the Milka and Mundy. You
 should now be able to visit a new
 location: Café Ankh. Speak to
 everybody there, then go outside and
 pick up the crowbar near the wine
 cellar. Next, go back to your office
 where you'll meet Al Khali the Dwarf.
 The rest is up to you.

WASTING AWAY

Q I never seem to have enough energy
 to do anything on *Quest For Glory V*.
 It's like my character suffers from M.E. or
 something. Is there a way to improve my
 stats at all?

Simon Pritchard

A Preparation is what it's all about.
 Build up your strength, vitality and
 agility, by holding the 'G' and 'K' keys
 until your stamina runs out. When that
 happens, rest for an hour and repeat
 the process again. Keep at it until your
 stats look pretty decent. Simple when
 you know how.

THIS IS MY CHURCH

Q I wonder if you could help me on
Jagged Alliance 2? I'm trying to
 find the Priest (Father Walker) in Drassen,

but he just doesn't seem to be there. I've
 checked the usual clergymen haunts
 (such as the bar and the church) and have
 come up empty-handed. Have I missed
 something important? Please tell me
 what to do.

Ben Evans

A It sounds like you're searching the
 town during the night. Frankly, this
 is the wrong time to find anybody
 because they're all tucked up in bed.
 However, if you wait until morning and
 head straight for the church you should
 find Father Walker there.

DEAD LINE

Q I'm totally crap at *EverQuest*. I try to
 make a character and they get killed
 as soon as I do anything slightly daring.
 Are there any cheats to make things
 easier, or any other tips you could give me
 so that I don't look like a complete dick to
 the rest of the online gaming community?

Roger Wright

A I'll try – it might be tough though.
 When you first start playing the
 game it's best to create a Ranger.
 Obviously, this is not a cheat as such,
 but the Ranger's advanced tracking
 ability makes it easier for you to find
 and kill enemies, which in turn means
 that you gain levels and experience
 quicker. See you online... dick.

LIGHTNING STRIKE

Q I always seem to be nailed by SAM
 sites in *F-22 Lightning 3*. For some
 reason, my avionics don't seem to pick
 them up accurately. Before I know what's
 happening I've got damage lights dancing

all over the place, and the ground hurtling
 towards me at about a mile a second. I can
 do everything else fine – it's just this little
 problem that's bugging me. What can I do?

Freddy Bee

A One of the most common mistakes
 when playing any flight simulation
 is to underuse your wingmen. Learning
 the commands that order your
 wingman to do exactly what you want
 often means you can fly an entire
 mission without firing a single weapon.
 In this game especially, your wingman
 seems particularly good at destroying
 SAM batteries, so just leave those
 targets to him. If you want to help out,
 try destroying the radar installations.

CLOAK AND SPANNER

Q My version of *Descent 3* doesn't
 work. Whenever I try to use the
 cloaking device I'm always spotted and
 blown to tiny pieces. What's the point?
 Is there a bug in the program? Or am I just
 confused?

Tony Hunt

A Yes, Tony – you're very confused.
 Think about it: when you're
 cloaked you need to be subtle. Using
 equipment such as the afterburner or
 headlights is just going to give you
 away. Now, at a guess, I would say
 that's your problem.

WAR GAMES

Q I seem to be having a few problems
 defending my bases against assaults
 in *Warzone 2100*. I build up what I think is
 a pretty good deterrent, and then watch
 stunned as enemy forces slice through

my defences as if they weren't there.
 Obviously there must be some kind
 of failsafe tactic here, and I was
 wondering whether you could impart that
 information to me?

Michael Black

A Defending against assaults is
 not easy. When you set up your
 home base at the beginning of each
 campaign, there are a number of areas
 you need to focus on. The first is the
 actual main base, but at the same time
 you cannot forget important buildings
 such as oil wells. You also need to look
 at the landscape surrounding your base
 and try to establish good ambush
 points in valleys leading towards your
 HQ. Finally, whenever you have some
 spare resources, continue adding to
 your defences – you can never have
 too many units.

BITCH FIGHT

Q How do I defeat the Alien Queen in
Aliens Vs Predator? I'm playing as the
 Predator and the weapons I have don't
 seem to do any damage at all. I've
 tried absolutely everything and am in
 desperate need of your help. Can you
 offer any assistance?

Sarah Moore

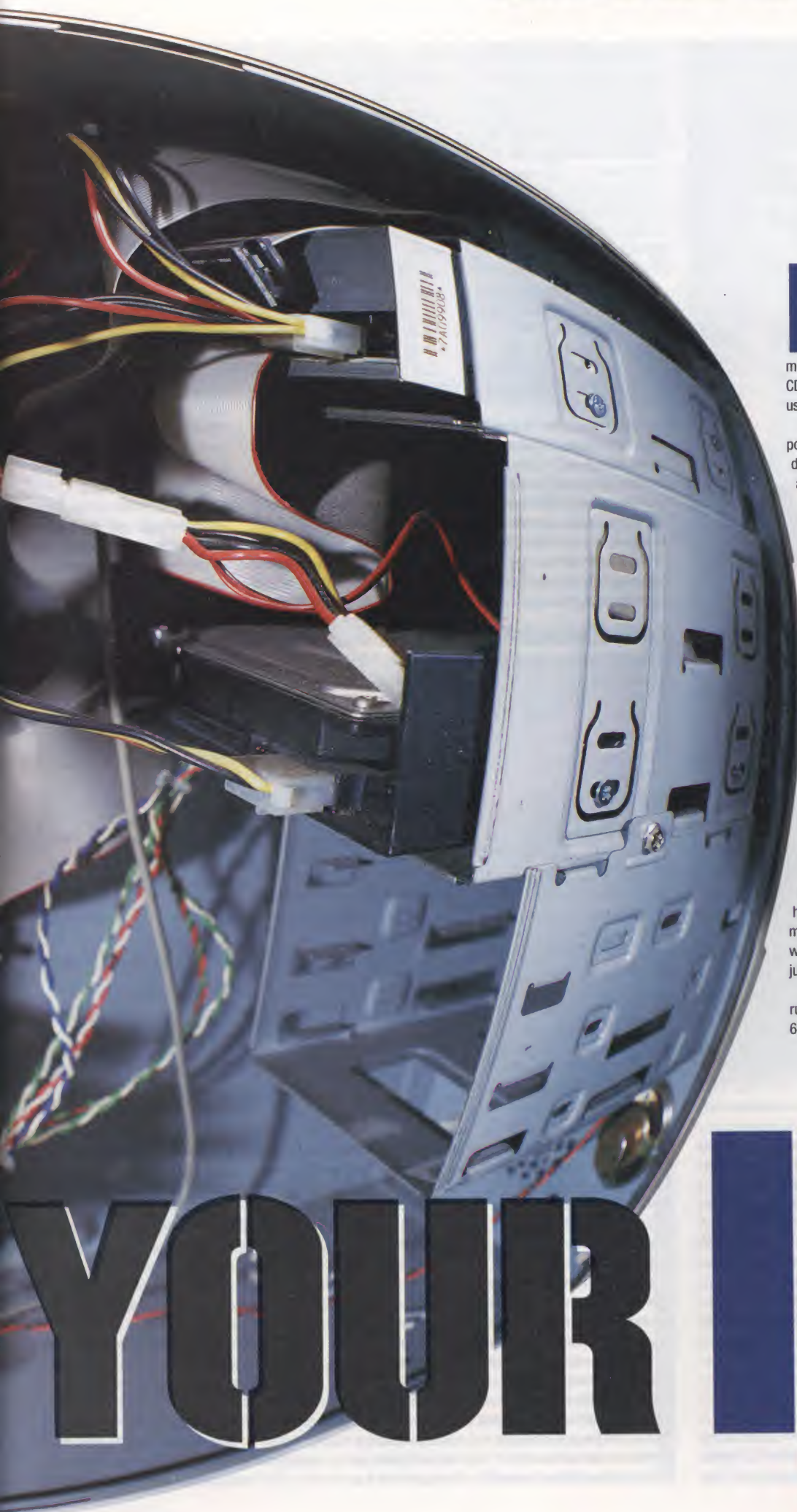
A No problem. She might seem quite
 terrifying at first, but she's actually
 quite easy to kill. The best weapon to
 use is the speargun. Keep firing at her
 head, and when she charges towards
 you dodge out of the way and run
 to the opposite side of the cavern.
 Repeat this procedure and, with a bit
 of luck, she'll die.

In the August issue of *PC ZONE* (#79) you may remember a very long, comparatively scary *How To...* about upgrading your motherboard and/or processor. You know, a hideous thing with flowcharts and lots of pictures of the inside of a PC, the kind of material that should be kept firmly on a password-protected adult verification checked site like www.geekswwho.playwithscrewdrivers.com. The good news is that this feature is nowhere near as nasty on the imagery front, but it does get a bit techie. I mean, you want to upgrade your machine, you gotta know where it's at, capische?

★ TECHED-UP Tim Porting

HOW TO...

UPGRADE



By any standards, the most difficult and far-reaching upgrade is that of the motherboard and processor. But there are many other upgrades that can make a huge difference to your machine's performance: memory, hard drive, sound card, video cards, modem, CD/DVD; and upgrades that will vastly improve the user experience such as a monitor, speakers, and so on.

Memory is probably the most important of the potential upgrades, and one you need to take a great deal of care over. The first important considerations are: a) what you already have installed, and b) what your motherboard manual has to say on the subject. The chances are your machine has 168-pin DIMM modules if it's a Pentium II (or equivalent) processor or faster (the sockets in the motherboard are usually long and brown/black in colour). If it has old 72-pin SIMM modules (the sockets are shorter and usually white), you should go back to square one and start thinking about upgrading your motherboard and processor, although adding more memory won't do you any harm.

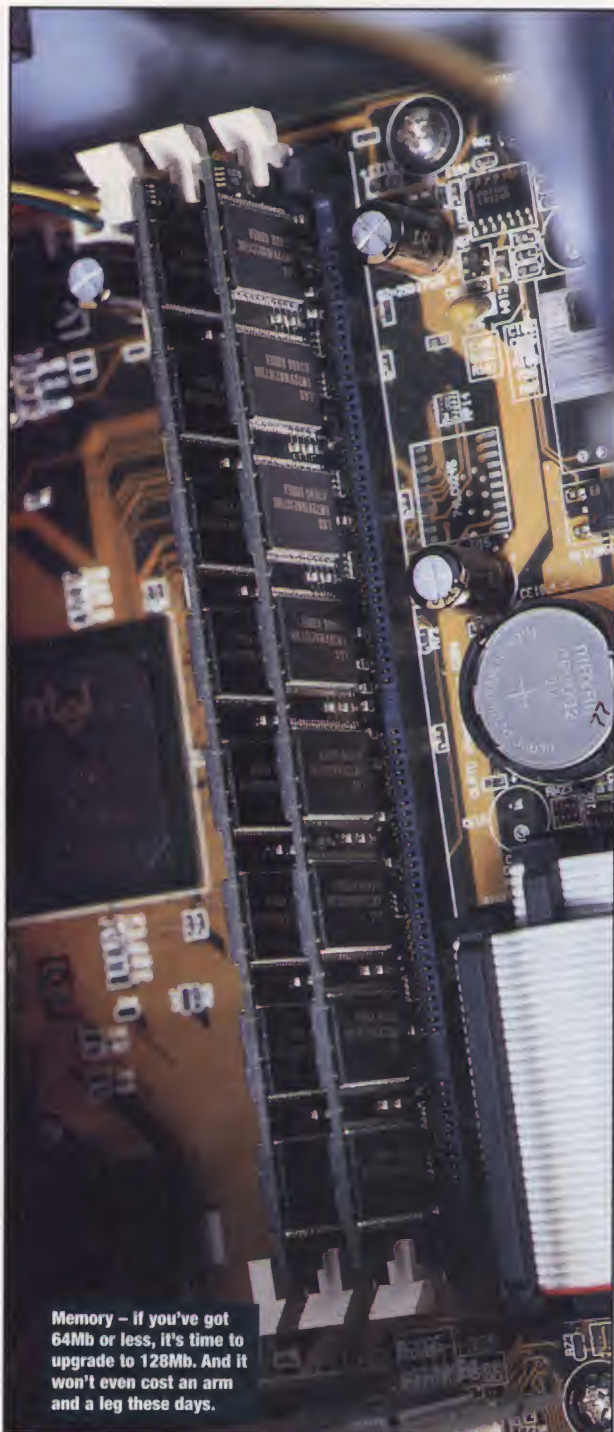
Let's say, for the sake of argument, your motherboard has three DIMM slots. Already installed you have, say, one 64Mb DIMM. First, you need to find out from the motherboard manual whether the motherboard's bus speed is running at 66MHz or 100MHz. If you don't have a motherboard manual, get one *now* — either contact tech support from the dealer or go online and search for the manufacturer's site (covered in the August feature). If you have your manual to hand, you can check the jumper settings on the motherboard and work backwards — it should be clear what speed the bus is running at depending on the jumper configuration.

OK, so let's say you have a 333MHz Pentium II running at a bus speed of 66MHz. You have one 64Mb 66MHz-rated DIMM installed. First, you need to find



YOUR PC

PART 2



Memory – if you've got 64Mb or less, it's time to upgrade to 128Mb. And it won't even cost an arm and a leg these days.

← out what kind of DIMM RAM it is. If you boot your machine, you may be lucky enough to find the BIOS flashes up on screen the fact you have EDO memory or SDRAM memory in Bank 0, which is where the memory module is seated in the motherboard. The latter is much better news, as SDRAM is faster. If you can't tell the RAM type from the BIOS, then you'll need to remove the DIMM and look at the manufacturer and code numbers on a label stuck to the module, or the module itself. Then search the Net to see if you can identify it. Messy, time-consuming, but essential.

The basic rule is that you *cannot* mix different RAM types.

If you have EDO memory, you can only add more EDO memory; otherwise you have to dump what you've got and start again. If you have SDRAM, you can only add SDRAM. The other rule is that you can only use memory modules of the same size, ie if you have 64Mb installed, you can only add further 64Mb chips. This is certainly the case with EDO memory; in theory, certain motherboards can accept a mixture of SDRAM DIMMs, but not all of them will, and personally I wouldn't even bother thinking about it.

OK, say you have a single 64Mb EDO DIMM. You can add up to another two 64Mb EDO DIMMs, and everything should work. I say

should, because the chances are that the new EDO memory you buy won't be made by the same manufacturer. While in theory all should be well, be prepared for unexpected memory errors, in which case your old memory has to be junked and you have to start from scratch. Sorry.

If your existing memory is SDRAM and the bus speed is 66MHz, the chances are you can upgrade in much the same way, though the same proviso applies. If you have, say, two 32Mb DIMMs, you can add an extra 32Mb EDO or SDRAM DIMM in just the same way, similarly if the DIMMs are 128Mb.

Just as a footnote – if your machine is running at 66MHz bus speed, and you have EDO memory installed, upgrading it to SDRAM won't make much difference, so you might as well use EDO RAM. At speeds of up to 66MHz, SDRAM as opposed to EDO memory will only speed things up by 2 per cent or thereabouts. However....

A WORD OF WARNING

If your motherboard is running at a 100MHz bus speed, it gets more complicated again. Your memory will definitely be SDRAM, not EDO. However, it may be of a number of different sub-types. Early 100MHz DIMMs were notoriously badly made on thin PCBs (Printed Circuit Boards), with poor machining and electrical tolerances. If you have one of these DIMMs, you may already be experiencing problems, so *dump it*. The only memory which works reliably at 100MHz bus speed is known as PC100 memory, SDRAM designed specifically for 100MHz use with tightly defined manufacturing tolerances. All PC100 memory should have PC100 printed somewhere on it, whether on the PCB or a label.

100MHz SDRAM may also be of different types: either 'Registered' or 'Unbuffered', and 'ECC' or 'non-ECC'. Let's start with the latter: ECC stands for 'Error Checking and Correction'. Memory that is ECC is in fact 72-bit, with 64-bits of 'memory' and 8 extra bits for error checking. Non-ECC memory (much more common) is 64-bit with no dedicated error checking. Vendors sell ECC memory, and it costs a great deal more than non-ECC. Only high-end servers need ECC memory, so don't bother. It's highly unlikely that your system will have ECC DIMMs; if it has, and you add non-ECC DIMMs, the two will work together, but you'll need to make

sure the BIOS thinks it's using non-ECC DIMMs. Clear? As mud.

More important is the distinction between Registered and Unbuffered PC100 DIMMs. Registered DIMMs are available in much higher configurations than Unbuffered, up to 512Mb on one DIMM. Hence for high-end machines used for digital video editing or animation, where you might need 2Gb of memory in four DIMM slots, you go for Registered PC100 SDRAM. Unbuffered PC100 DIMMs are available in sizes up to 128Mb, so a system with three DIMM slots can house up to 384Mb RAM, for example.

You *cannot* mix Registered and Unbuffered memory. The chances are, if your system has PC100 memory, it will be Unbuffered, so if in doubt add Unbuffered DIMMs. If you are dead rich (Registered DIMMs are much more expensive, Mb for Mb), then dump your Unbuffered DIMMs and replace them with big fat Registered DIMMs. But you're daft if you think you'll need more than 384Mb RAM for gaming in the near future – by the time games need more than 384Mb RAM, the processor and motherboard will also need upgrading and memory will be running at 133MHz or faster, so you'll be dumping your old Registered DIMMs anyway.

Your motherboard manual should spell all this out fairly clearly. Read it carefully – for example, many motherboards were manufactured before 128Mb SDRAM DIMMs were available, and won't guarantee problem-

aware, you can use PC100 memory in a 66MHz bus (this is based on several motherboard manuals which say that for 66MHz operation you must use memory rated at 66-100MHz, implying there should be no problems for memory which is too fast). I guess it should be fine, but I've not tested it personally.

Finally, optimise your BIOS settings to match the memory you have fitted. A good start is to load the 'Optimal Performance' settings and see if the machine works; if not, go for the fail-safe option and tweak the settings one by one. Generally, if there's an Auto option for settings like 'SDRAM RAS# to CAS# Delay' (urgh), use it.

YOU'RE ONLY AS FAST AS YOUR VIDEO

Upgrading your 'video subsystem' isn't quite the walk in the park it used to be. Graphics cards were designed either as 2D (for normals Windows operation) or 3D (for shifting polygons around fast). Early attempts to mix the two (so-called 2D/3D) ended up being the worst of both worlds.

Typically, 3D accelerators sat in a spare PCI slot alongside your main video card, and video was cascaded from your main video card into the 3D card, which speeded up 3D operations, then got passed through to the monitor. Hence to upgrade your 3D performance, you just add or replace the 3D bit.

Nowadays, the fastest 2D/3D performance is available from

“Nowadays, the fastest 2D/3D performance is available from single card solutions that plug into the AGP slot in your PC, so you have to dump whatever video card or cards you already have plugged into your system”

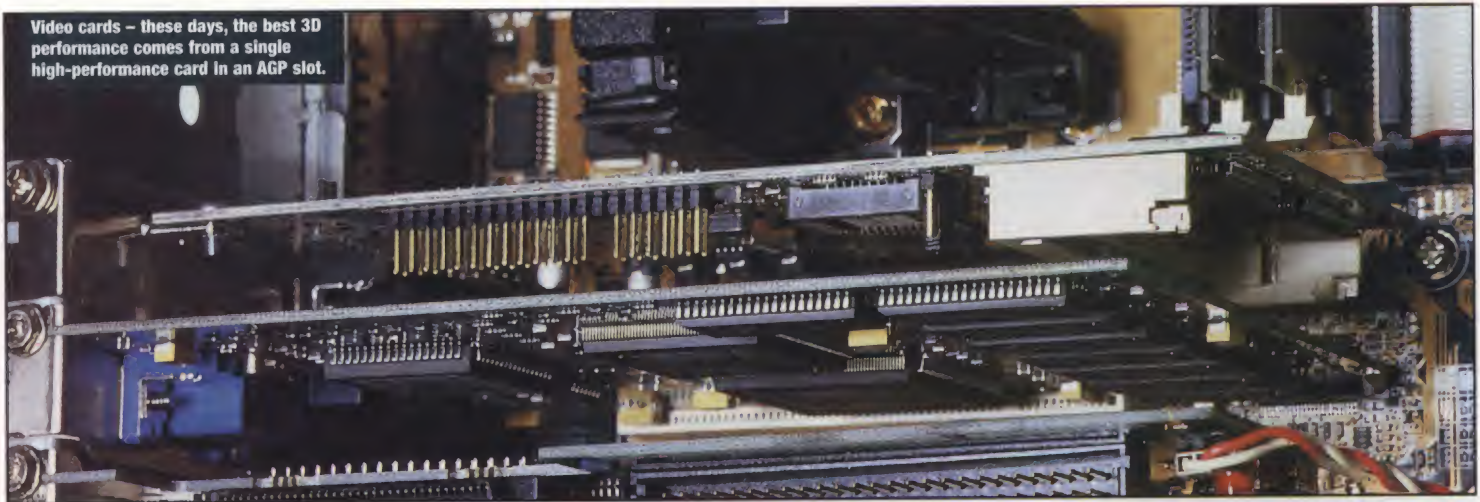
free operation. If so, go to the motherboard manufacturer's website and check the latest version of the manual or FAQ against the motherboard revision number. Also, many manuals state that when using SDRAM DIMMs it doesn't matter which Bank they're placed in. Don't believe it – I've read that machines run faster if the first Bank filled is Bank 0, so always fill DIMM slots from Bank 0 upwards.

One other thing: you may want to buy PC100 memory, even if your machine is running at 66MHz because, if you upgrade the motherboard to a 100MHz operation later, you can take the memory with it. As far as I'm

single card solutions that plug into the AGP slot in your PC, so you have to dump whatever video card or cards you already have plugged into your system.

AGP – Accelerated Graphics Port – is a slot type that's been around for a while in motherboards designed for Pentium II and equivalent processors. It's dead easy to see if you've got one: the AGP slot is typically brown in colour (PCI slots are white, ISA black) and is set back further from the 'external connection' side of the motherboard than the other slots. You will probably have an AGP graphics card plugged in if your PC was bought recently. AGP has a higher

Video cards — these days, the best 3D performance comes from a single high-performance card in an AGP slot.



bandwidth than PCI, which is why it's faster. For example, the maximum theoretical data rate of a PCI slot (which runs at 33MHz) is around 132Mb/sec. An AGP slot running at 66MHz (called AGP 2X, ie twice 33MHz) can transfer 528Mb/sec; in AGP 4X mode data rates of well over 900Mb/sec are possible. The higher the

bandwidth, the more polygons can be pumped through — and textures can be higher resolution, giving more visual detail.

Most high-end cards use AGP 2X and you need to check your motherboard is fully AGP 2X compliant. Most are. A few 2D/3D chipsets cards require AGP 4X operation, such as S3's Savage4.

PC ZONE regularly carries editorial features about the current state of play with 3D accelerators, so this feature is not going to bang on about comparative performance too much, but will instead give you a few pointers in the right direction.

The big shoot-out is between 3Dfx's Voodoo3 chipset and Riva's

TNT2 chipset. There are advantages and disadvantages to both, but for ZONE's money, cards based on the Riva TNT2 have the edge, mainly because they are capable of 32-bit rendering, unlike current 3Dfx-based cards. Also bear in mind that not all current-generation cards with the same chipset give the same performance, as was the case, for example, with Voodoo2 cards. This is because the Core clock speed (that of the main chip) and the Memory clock (the speed of the SDRAM on the card) varies from board to board. Some boards have a software utility that allows you to change the clock of both. Hence a Riva TNT2 board running at 180MHz Core and 220MHz Memory will be faster than one running with 125MHz Core and 150MHz Memory, even though the chipsets may be identical. Some cards can be 'overclocked' reliably, some can't. If you want to get 'down and dirty' with overclocked video cards, you need to research carefully online. Hercules' TNT2 boards are widely held to be the fastest, running reliably at 180/200MHz; for a good price/performance trade-off, go for Guillemot's Xentor 32 Ultra which runs at 150/183MHz. Make sure you choose a card with a full 32Mb of memory onboard for optimal performance and quality, rather than taking the 16Mb shortcut.

There are a couple of major provisos to these basic rules. First, you're in a world of pain if you have an AMD-based machine with a Super7 motherboard. This is absolutely not AMD's fault — their K6-III range is arguably the best processor family for gaming at the moment — but that of the manufacturers who provide the chipsets for Super7 motherboards, the most common being ALi's Aladdin V and VIA's MVP3. Basically, though these

boards have AGP slots, a particularly important function of AGP known as GART (Graphics Address Remapping Table) doesn't work as seamlessly as it does with Intel's 440BX chipset found on Slot 1 motherboards. Aladdin V hates TNT2, so if you have a Super7 board with this chipset, you are best off with a pair of old Voodoo2 boards SLI'd together (more of which later). There are ways to get MVP3-based boards working with TNT2, but you have to delve deep into the BIOS settings and run various utilities in the right order.

If you have an Intel-based machine, you should have no problem with any of the current-generation 2D/3D boards.

I mentioned the practice of running two Voodoo2 boards SLI'd together. Basically, this is not a bad upgrade option if you have a slowish Pentium II and already have a 2D graphics card partnered with a Voodoo2 card. Voodoo2 cards are now dirt cheap; buy an extra one, provided you have a spare PCI slot, connect it to the other with the SLI cable supplied, and the two Voodoo2 cards work in tandem to give results that are not too far removed from a Voodoo3 card — and the drivers are completely stable, another plus. When you finally get round to upgrading your whole machine, then you can move on to a single-slot AGP solution.

BIG, HARD AND FAST

The next area to take a look at is your system storage — hard drive and CD/DVD-ROM. To be honest, no-one really pays much attention to these areas as most modern systems have hard drives and CDs which are 'fast enough'. But if you really want to optimise your system, you may want to upgrade, especially where your hard drive is concerned.



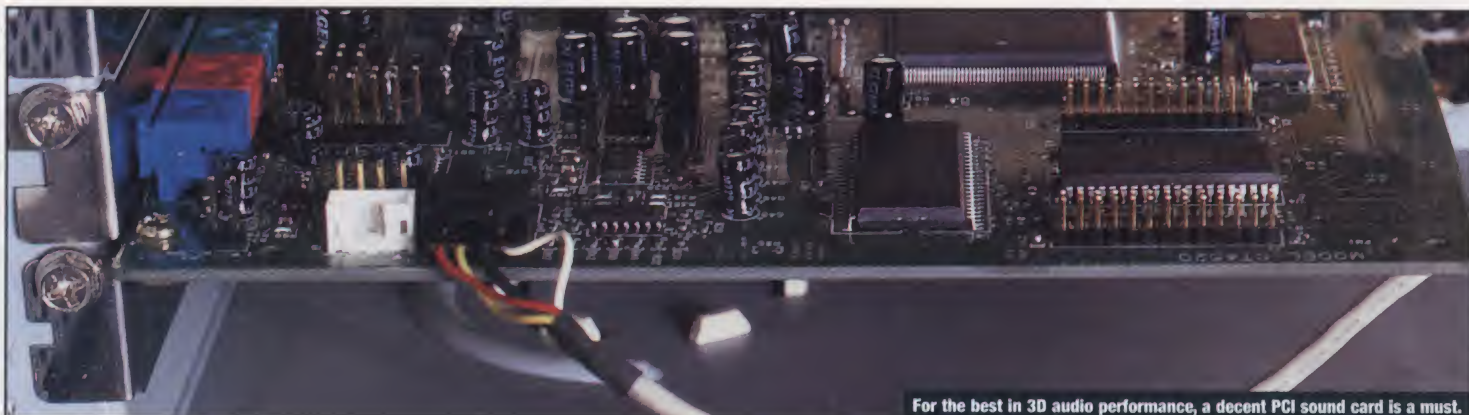
EverQuest is almost unplayable with 64Mb RAM. You'll need at least 128Mb RAM for smooth play.

DO ALL ROADS LEAD TO RAM?

OK, so you've got a PC with 64Mb RAM, but is it worth an upgrade? 128Mb? 192Mb? 256Mb? Well, yes and no, says *Gareth Ramsey*

The benefits of an upgrade decrease with every step up the 'RAM ladder' you go. A jump from 64Mb to 128Mb will produce a noticeable increase in system performance, with applications and games running more smoothly and possibly producing less system crashes. Switching between apps and games will have less of a 'lag' and game performance should even improve, especially on machines with low-memory (8-16Mb) AGP 3D cards, as system memory is allocated to the card.

However, step past the 128Mb mark and the improvements to the games player become less apparent. While designers manipulating photo-realistic images, users of 3D rendering packages and other such high-end, memory-intensive applications may see a performance increase, today's games will not make use of this extra resource. And while tomorrow's games will, when that day arrives you'll probably be running a Pentium IV, which may not be compatible with your existing memory.



For the best in 3D audio performance, a decent PCI sound card is a must.

← Sorry, we're going back into techie-land again. Fit that propeller to your forehead and hold on to your seat.

First off — SCSI versus EIDE interface. Most consumer PCs have EIDE (Enhanced Integrated Drive Electronics) hard drives and CD-ROMs. The controller for these devices is built into the motherboard. There are two 'channels' (known as Primary and Secondary), each of which has its own cable. Each channel can have

two IDE or EIDE devices connected to it. If you have two devices on one channel, they have to share the data bandwidth so, if possible, you should keep each device on its own channel, for example a single hard drive on the Primary channel and the CD-ROM on the Secondary. As you add extra drives (CD writers, extra hard drives) performance will suffer.

SCSI (Small Computer System Interface) is a high-performance interface that is less commonly

found in consumer PCs. Standard SCSI controllers can control up to seven SCSI devices (one of which is the controller itself); 'Wide SCSI' can handle up to 15. SCSI really comes into its own when you have numerous devices connected, as the SCSI bus is better at handling multiple data streams than EIDE. Fast SCSI controllers are very fast indeed, with reliable continuous data transfer rates of up to 80Mb/sec. If you want the very best performance, go SCSI. The main drawback is price: SCSI drives are much more expensive as they have more complex control electronics within the drive, and very few motherboards have built-in SCSI, so you'll need to buy an extra SCSI adaptor card as well — and the best ones are not cheap. If you have SCSI already, you're laughing (but not all the way to the bank); if you have EIDE, the chances are it's best to stick with that unless you're loaded.

EIDE itself comes in several performance flavours. The original IDE standard runs at speeds of between 2.1Mb/sec and 8.3Mb/sec transfer rates. EIDE in what is known as ATA-2 configuration can handle 11.1Mb/sec in what your BIOS calls PIO Mode 3, up to a maximum of 16.6Mb/sec in PIO Mode 4 with multi-word DMA 2 (don't worry about what this means for now). The latest EIDE controllers run in what is known as 'Ultra ATA', 'ATA-33' or 'Ultra DMA/33' mode, which uses multi-word DMA 3 to handle transfer rates of up to 33.3Mb/sec.

Confused? Don't be. Don't worry about what any of this means, just learn the order of preference — Ultra DMA/33 is better than ATA-2. If you check your motherboard manual, it will tell you what the built-in EIDE interface can handle. Most modern motherboards are Ultra DMA/33 compliant, so for optimal performance look for a

hard drive which is also Ultra DMA/33 compliant.

Recently a few 'Ultra DMA/66' or 'ATA-66' drives have appeared which can handle transfer rates of up to 66Mb/sec. It's important to note that ATA-66 drives need ATA-66 controllers to extract their performance benefit, so if you're intending to just plug it into your ATA-33 motherboard, there's no point in shelling out the premium for an ATA-66 drive. You first need to buy an ATA-66 controller card, then plug the ATA-66 drive into that. For the time being, don't bother.

OK, so the chances are you should opt for an Ultra DMA/33 drive. If you already have one, and you have enough storage space, there's not a lot of point in upgrading. The relevant statistic here becomes the 'rotational

developing faster than any other technology, 3D acceleration apart, and the improvement in the gaming experience you can obtain from a top-notch card is remarkable.

Gone are the days when a sound card was, well, a sound card. Under DOS, all that mattered for gamers was rock-solid SoundBlaster compatibility. Nowadays, Windows and DirectX for the most part handle the basic communication between card and computer seamlessly, and bells and whistles depend on the card itself.

Basic rules first. If you have an ISA sound card, for example, a Creative Labs SoundBlaster 16, AWE-32 or AWE-64, then it's definitely time to upgrade. ISA sound cards cannot handle the audio demands of the latest



→ A steering wheel helps enormously with driving games, obviously.

OTHER BITS TO SHOW OFF TO YOUR MATES

If you want a PC that will 'lidderrally' cause your mates to spontaneously combust with jealousy (assuming you have any), then try the following upgrades for good measure

Monitors — why make do with 17 inches when a full 21 inches is out there begging to be bought? It'll set you back at least £500, but *Quake III* will look spoogetastic. Also, how about popping a cable modem in your machine? You have got cable, haven't you? Or at least upgrade to 56.6 speed with full answer machine facility. If you have a house full of PCs, it's time to buy a fast Ethernet card and link them all up.

Last but not least, you might want to investigate a set of Rolls-Royce peripherals: steering wheel and pedal set, new joystick, game pads, and so on. Just remember to make it all force feedback. You know it makes sense. Your bank manager knows it doesn't. Who wears the trousers anyway?

“In-game audio is developing faster than any other technology, 3D acceleration apart, and the improvement in the gaming experience you can obtain from a top-notch sound card is remarkable”

speed' of the drive itself. Most decent EIDE drives spin at 5,400rpm. However, more expensive drives are available which spin at 7,200rpm, which means that data stored on the outside edge of the hard drive platters can be pumped out faster. You want the best? Go for 7,200rpm drives such as the superb Maxtor DiamondMax Plus 5120, available in sizes from 10.2Gb to a whopping 20.4Gb. What benefit will you see? Faster loading times for games, fewer in-game hiccups as it swaps new level data from drive to RAM and less time when swapping between Windows applications.

THE SOUND OF MUSIC (AND DISSEMBOWELLING)

You'd be surprised what benefits can be had by upgrading your sound card. In-game audio is

generation of spankadelic games.

We reviewed a crop of gaming sound cards back in the March 1999 issue (#74), which is worth digging out if you want to get down and dirty with how the beasts work. For the purposes of this feature, we'll run through the obvious options.

First of all, you'll be upgrading with a PCI card, so check that you have a spare slot. Second, you should be looking to buy a card with full 3D sound support aimed at gamers. The concept is simple, but the technology requires a brain the size of Leamington Spa to even begin to understand it. Basically, an old-style sound card operated in stereo — in-game sounds were delivered on just a right-left axis. We have two ears and yet we 'hear' audio in three dimensions, so surely two speakers or headphones should be

able to deliver sound to our ears in such a way that we can 'sense' what direction it comes from?

Boffins worked out a set of mathematical sound filters called HRTFs (Head Related Transfer Functions) that could alter a basic sound in real time so that it had directional cues. This can work reasonably well within left-right and up-down dimensions, but is still relatively crap with sounds behind us. In real life, we move our head from side to side to determine sounds from behind, so the only way to duplicate this is to have speakers placed physically behind us.

This gives rise to a basic rule: for 'proper' in-game 3D sound, you need four speakers – front left and right, and rear left and right. Thus the sound card has to have two stereo outputs, one for the front pair and one for the rear pair. This, combined with HRTF technology for up-down cues, gives us, in theory at least, a 3D audio environment.

There are other requirements for decent in-game audio. For starters, you need a card that can send multiple streams of audio simultaneously, so you get separate audio cues for each weapon, footfall, etc. These streams are directional, so the card has to be able to make its own calculations for each stream without handing too much of the thinking to the CPU, or the frame rate will drop while the CPU is busy processing sound.

The next requirement is for more sophisticated modelling of the nature of sound in different environments. When a noise is made, it reflects off surfaces, giving reflective audio cues to our ears. Depending on the nature of the surface it reflects off, the tone will change: a gun going off in a metal pipe will sound very different from the same gun being fired in a huge cavern.

So which sound cards can

handle this stuff? There are three main protagonists where this sound technology is concerned: Aureal with their A3D 2.0 API; Sensaura, who have recently released a new 3D audio API based on what they call 'MultiDrive' and 'MacroFX' technologies; and Creative Labs, whose SoundBlaster Live! range features positional audio technology (though how it works is very vague); and EAX – Environmental Audio extensions for rich context-sensitive reflective reverberation.

It all sounds a bit techie – and it is. Basically, these three companies are slugging it out in the PR battle for ascendancy, and all have their strengths and weaknesses. Aureal have massive developer support, and their powerful Vortex 2 chipset is optimised for 16 3D audio streams with up to 60 reflective audio streams with a low processor overhead. Their A3D 2.0 standard is very clever indeed. Creative Labs' SoundBlaster Live! also has great developer support for EAX and seems very efficient at handling large numbers of audio streams, but the basic positional technology is not as high-end – there seems to be no real explanation of how it works and whether it uses HRTFs. Sensaura are the odd ones out: their latest technology has only just come to fruition in the ESS Canyon3D chipset used by Terratec's superb DMX sound card. Early tests indicate it is the most sophisticated technology with full HRTF both front and rear, but a highish CPU overhead is the price you pay for the complexity and realism.

Cutting out all the jargon, as a simple rule, hard-core gamers with mid-range Pentium IIs should go for Vortex 2 cards (Terratec Xlerate Pro, VideoLogic SonicVortex 2 and Diamond MonsterSound MX300); gamers



CD, CDR, DVD AND OTHER DAFT ACRONYMS

Are DVD games the way ahead? Possibly!

There's not a lot to say here to gamers. Most PCs have CD-ROM drives fitted as standard, usually EIDE devices. The faster the speed rating (ie 32-speed, 40-speed, etc) the faster data can be extracted from the CD and pumped to memory or hard drive. Fast CD-ROM drives are better for gamers because everything installs quicker, and when games have to dip into the CD-ROM to bring up game data to RAM, it'll be faster. But to be honest, the law of diminishing returns applies. If you are the proud owner of a 32-speed drive or faster, there's not much point in upgrading; I'm quite happy with my SCSI 12-speed, thank you.

So the question is: DVD or not DVD? DVD ain't much use for gamers at present, but it probably will be in the future. If you want to play DVD films on your PC, it's a worthwhile upgrade, but if games and games alone are your bag, wait until there are a few titles out there that have DVD cut-scenes that you can't live without, then upgrade. If you can't wait, you'd be wise to go for a decent upgrade kit from Guillemot or Creative Labs. However, if you have a slower Pentium II or equivalent and want to watch DVD films, you'll need an MPEG-2 decoder card (included with many DVD-ROM kits) for reliable playback. Faster machines can perform MPEG-2 decoding in real time without too much trouble. Bear in mind that you will need custom speaker and decoder hardware for Dolby Digital™ sound. Look out for a special feature on DVD drives and the part they play in the games industry in the coming months.

CD Writers (CDRs) are also worth bearing in mind. Not for pirating games, you understand, but for back-up, music applications, and so on.

who want to use their machine for making music as well, try the SoundBlaster Live!; and if you have a fast machine, such as a Pentium III, try the new Terratec DMX. There, simple. Why didn't I just say that in the first place?

THE END

That's pretty much it – we've covered processors, motherboards, memory, video cards, hard and CD-ROM drives and sound cards. Check out the panel labelled 'Other bits to show

off to your mates' for the last few upgradable components. Just bear one thing in mind – no matter how many bells and whistles you add, it'll all be out of date within 18 months. Still want to upgrade? Mmmm... [E2]



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DUNGEON KEEPER 2

WALKTHROUGH

Fed up with the forces of good making your life hell? Never fear for help is at hand in the form of our wicked walkthrough. So what are you waiting for? Allow *Keith Pullin* and his horny followers to lead you to glory

★ REVIEWED PCZ #79 SCORE 94%

This guide allows you to breeze through Bullfrog's devilish masterpiece with ease. We've got walkthroughs for each level, advanced dungeon design, and a host of other revealing strategies.

The first three levels are essentially training levels. So, moving swiftly on...

LEVEL 4

Begin with the usual lair, hatchery, treasury and library set-up. Once you have a healthy dungeon, dig west to claim the guardroom that attracts Dark Elves. Now dig north up the east side of the map, avoiding a head-on assault.

On the way is Old Bob who is guarding the main gate. Possess a Dark Elf with zoom your view in to kill Bob with arrows. Continue up the right side of the base, dig out the wall, and surprise Lord Ludwig. Easy.



➊ Using the Dark Elf's zoom view can help kill enemies that would otherwise be unreachable.

LEVEL 5

Gain the portal quickly and then create a small guardroom to the right of it. This protects the area that heroes are likely to attack first. Build up your usual dungeon faculties, ensuring you spread south to claim the neutral prison. Your Imps can now drag unconscious and dying enemies into the prison to be converted into skeletons. Make sure the area to the north of the guardroom is claimed and mined, and set up some sentry guns.

Finally, when you have about six skeletons, you can attack the keep in the northeast. Send the bones in first to disable the fear traps, and then edge back to draw the armies of good into your prepared killing field.



➋ Skeletons are the only creatures who can cope with the terror of the fear traps.



➌ It's rather handy that any enemy creature who wanders onto your territory can be zapped with the thunderbolt spell.

LEVEL 6A

First things first: torture the prisoners to reveal areas of the map. Now build quickly and claim as much land as you can. Note the gold seam to the east – this is

a valuable supply and should keep you going for the duration of the level. Set up barricades and sentry traps around your land to slow down the constant attacks from your foe.

When your creatures are at level three or four, you can attack via the east or west, but not straight through the front gate. Ideally, you need to send a lone scout (possibly a Warlock or Mistress) to clean out these side passages, rescue the neutral Mistress held within, and then launch your assault. Providing you have a good mixed force of well-trained monsters, Lord Ironhelm is no problem.

TRAP PLACEMENTS

Certain trap combinations are more effective than others



Sentry traps behind barricades are an excellent deterrent no matter what level you're on.



Slap boulders in the direction of your foes to flatten their attack.



Move up the right side and overwhelm the sentry guns as you go.



① Keep your mistress happy by providing a torture chamber for her macabre pleasure.



② A strong defence of barricades repels unwanted guests.

LEVEL 6B

Torture the wizard your minions have already captured to reveal the location of Lord Ironhelm.

Use the heal spell to good effect while you advance to claim the distant portal. Also, use the same spell on enemy heroes while you are torturing them to convert them to your cause.

When you've amassed a swarthy army, head north so that you are ready for when the timer reaches zero and Lord Ironhelm attempts to flee. Ambush him east of his lair, and then kill him.



③ Dropping your enemies onto a torture device can reveal useful information.



④ Clobber Lord Ironhelm as he attempts to flee east.

LEVEL 7

Don't worry about the giants heading for your dungeon heart, your servants can handle it. Dig out all the gold you can, and make space for a prison among your usual constructions. While you're doing this, your Imps uncover some abandoned rooms. Secure these by placing alarm traps along the lava side of your land. With the rest of your defence in place, head east to the guardroom with three doors. Send in a horde to take over this room, and then head south to Lord Sigmund by bridging across the lava. (Use the sight of evil spell to check your route.)



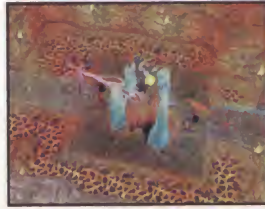
① Use alarm traps to warn your troops about invading giants.



② Head south after taking this guardroom to find Lord Sigmund.

LEVEL 8

You begin with a few creatures. Protect them well until you have claimed the nearby portal. Continue east of the portal and then slowly work your way north towards Lord Titus. You need to take each room, one by one. Rest after each battle, and try to convert as many heroes as you can by squeezing a torture chamber into your dungeon. If you're strapped for cash (which is likely) set the casino on low payout in order to swell your coffers.



① Fighting off the wizards who protect the portal near the start can be a hard-fought battle.



② If you're running low on cash, start making money Vegas-style.

LEVEL 9

Expand eastwards. When you've erected your buzzing hive of hate, create a veritable feast of gas traps and sentry guns, just to the south of the eastern outpost. Send a small party to attack, then retreat back into your domain luring the heroes into your traps. Repeat this manoeuvre with the other outposts.

By now time should be running low and the Lord should be approaching. Set up troops, barricades and sentry guns around the middle outpost and just let him come to you. Goodnight Vienna.



① Bile demons can make short work of the outposts.

Mine the gem seam for an everlasting supply of gold.



LEVEL 10

Dig a 5x5 opening. Build a workshop around the edge, then a lair inside that, and a hatchery in the middle. To complete the design, convert some giants and then put them to work.

When a huge trapped area is in place to the north of your base, you can destroy the hero gates. When that's done, head north along either edge of the map to find Asmodeus. He will counter-attack with most of his army. Wait until they're flailing in your traps, and then send your troops into his dungeon heart to crush him.



① Build your dungeon within the red box area, and set up a huge trapped area after mining the gold seam.

LEVEL 11A

There are four other evil keepers to scrap in this scenario – and it can get messy. The trick, once again, is speed and surprise. Build efficient workshops and ensure all your creatures train well, are happy, and well fed. Claiming at least two nearby portals is no problem. Any more than that and you'll need to fight for them.

Eventually, you can amass a formidable level three and four army. Take them on a rampage (using your call to arms spell



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← frequently) and kill the other keepers by overwhelming them with sheer numbers.



① Use the call to arms spell to bolster a terrifying army.

LEVEL 11B

Use exactly the same tactic as 11a.



① There are loads of areas that have already been dug out on this level, so make the most of them by quickly filling them with rooms.

LEVEL 11C

Destroy the yellow dungeon heart first, and then continue with the same tactics used in level 11a and 11b.



① Attack the yellow heart before they build up a strong enough force to take you out.

ROOM FOR MORE?

Combining certain kinds of rooms can greatly improve the overall efficiency of your minions



Building a torture chamber around your prison means that converting enemy creatures to your cause becomes a cinch. Simply take them from the prison and strap them straight onto any device you like. When they are just about to die, make sure you heal them and put them back in prison. Repeat this process and eventually they will see the error of their ways and turn to the dark side.



By providing trolls with a lair and a hatchery within their workshop, they have absolutely no need to go anywhere at all. They can stay exactly where they are, and so will produce traps and doors far more quickly. Remember, too, that giants make even better workers than trolls.



① By providing trolls with a lair and a hatchery within their workshop, they have absolutely no need to go anywhere at all. They can stay exactly where they are, and so will produce traps and doors far more quickly. Remember, too, that giants make even better workers than trolls.

LEVEL 12

After thwarting the initial dwarf attacks, dig east and claim the graveyard. Knock around for a while, killing whoever you can while directing bodies to the graveyard (five bodies make one vampire). When you've formed a mighty undead army, march north to ransack the hero keep. Use these bodies to bolster your army further. Eventually dig out the right side of the map to enter Malachai's Dungeon and kill him and his evil heart.



① The graveyard is the home of the Vampire. Drop bodies on the muddy ground to breed them.



① Mine through the walls to grab these neutral skeletons before taking on the Dwarves.

LEVEL 13

On this level it is important to keep your evil workers and the captured heroes apart. Build a separate dungeon for the heroes so they don't have to mingle with the Goblins etc, whom they hate.

Monks are the key to this level as they are highly effective against Vampires (stake in the heart and all that). To arrange a ready supply of them, capture the hero prison and torture room. The only problem with Monks is that they are slower than the Vampires. To try to even things up a bit, drop a few cunningly placed traps.

Eventually Malleus launches a major assault. When most of that

has been wiped out, it's time to head to his heart and well and truly trash it.



① Monks – they may look harmless, but they're excellent vampire hunters.



① Claiming this mana store solves all your magical problems.

LEVEL 14

A fairly small level, which is also quite easy. Attack sensibly, resting and healing your troops when they need it. There's also Horny, of course. Use him when it's absolutely necessary for extra insurance. Once you've captured the mana sources, the goodly Lord is just to the north.



① Your mission is to take over this manastore.

LEVEL 15A

Work quickly to rescue as many of your imprisoned Black Knights as possible. Also, dig south to rescue Knud the mad Troll who's an ace trap maker. Use the Black Knights to free the rest of their kin and take the combat pit in the process.

When the enemy forces attack, push them back towards their own dungeon, and move yours *with* you in the process. In other words, sell your old rooms and build new ones. This means your monsters won't have so far to go to get paid, eat, and sleep.

Finally, dispatch the Lord quickly before he gets a chance to call reinforcements.



① Freeing the Knights quickly is your first priority at this stage.



① Train your creatures up to level 8 in the combat pit.

LEVEL 15B

Head north to seize the unguarded portal. Make use of the gold on the way to build a combat pit. Next, take the southern portal guarded by



Summoning Horny can be a great asset.

Fairies. There are plenty of goodies to be found around here, so have a good sniff around before you launch your assault on the Fairy castle.

When you do finally attack, make sure it's from the west and that your route is well trapped just in case you need to retreat. Work your way through to the central rooms – trapping as you go – and then annihilate the main Fairy army and the Lord.



⚡ Fairies may look weak, but they're quick and deadly.



⚡ Even the undead can be trained in the combat pit.

LEVEL 16

Stealth and cunning is the key here. Slowly claim the rooms around the centre of the keep by managing your Imps well. If they start scampering off claiming obvious territory, pick them up, or patrolling guards (who will call reinforcements) might spot them.

When you uncover the portal, let your minions mass in an area to the north and then pull off the final assault against Lord Pureheart.



⚡ If you free this bunch of neutral Salamanders you'll gain some helpful allies.



⚡ Use secret doors to stop the heroes from finding you.

LEVEL 17

Erect separate dungeons around each portal. One should house the combat pit and training room, while the other should boast a library and workshop. Both dungeons should also have their own lair, hatchery and treasury. Nearer the dungeon heart, construct a prison, torture room and graveyard – but remember these rooms are for the enemy keeper's creatures, not the heroes who you have to kill outright to curry the favour of the Dark Angels.

Now concentrate on the fight. The other keepers are also trying to gain the Dark Angels' help, so only attack keepers who are attacking heroes (and thus stealing them). Only when you've enlisted the help of the Dark Angels can you defeat the rest of the keepers and gain the gem.



⚡ Knock out some 5x5 rooms around the portals and build two separate dungeons.



⚡ Welcome to the home of the deadly Dark Angels.

LEVEL 18

Good training in the combat pit and clever use of traps gets you through this battle. It's quite straightforward really: convert all the heroes you can, then attack the lesser keepers first and go for the daddy last. If you get into trouble, call Horny.



⚡ Taking over this gem seam weakens your enemies, yet bolsters your gold reserves.

LEVEL 19

Prince Balder can be trapped on an island by claiming the bridges he patrols. The other two can be trapped by attacking them simultaneously where their patrol routes cross. Once you have them all snared, knock them out and take them back to your prison for some special treatment where they soon divulge the location of the gem.



⚡ The Princes are well guarded, so choose your ambush time and location carefully.



Once again you have a large area ready mined for you, so take advantage quickly.

LEVEL 20

The King himself. It's an all-out battle between good and evil. Train your creatures to the highest level and away you go. What else can we say? You've learnt all there is to know, so just do it. [X]

⚡ The King is no mug. You'll have to get through numerous defences before you can take him and his lackeys on.



SECRET GAMES

Remember to collect all the secrets you find on each level – some of them even allow you to play extra games



Just go ahead and shoot the enemies as they walk by – it's a bit like being at the fairground really.



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HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

WALKTHROUGH

You can win World War II single-handed. *Keith Pullin* reveals how...

★ REVIEWED PCZ #79 SCORE 91%

Hidden & Dangerous is a tough game – that's why we've provided this guide. However, don't think we're going to hand everything to you on a plate. This walkthrough only provides general hints and tactics for each level, so the actual picking and choosing of what enemies to kill first is left up to you. Anyway, onwards and upwards...

The first three levels are essentially training levels. If you can't get past them, there really is no hope. So, moving swiftly on...

CAMPAIGN ONE

OPERATION IRON SWARM, ITALY

AMBER GLOW

Begin with the sniper leading and the rest backing up. When you're half-way across the bridge, move the sniper down a maintenance tunnel to reach the guardhouse on the other side. Use him to pick off the waiting soldiers and then move all of your team to the rendezvous point.

HEART OF BELL

Send a sniper through the first exit. Kill the guard in the northeast tower and the soldier on the ground. Climb the tank to the west and use this excellent vantage point to pick off all the enemies you can, including the machine gunners in the towers. Bring the rest of your team up,

and divide them into two groups. Send two utility soldiers along the north wall of the refinery and destroy any vehicles you discover. Inside the building you find the pilots have been moved. Proceed back to the southeast corner and set the timed explosives on the tanks, as indicated in the briefing. After the bang, head back down the tunnel to the exit.



ⓘ The sniper comes in very handy indeed.

WHIRLWIND

Move all of your team except the sniper behind the nearest train. Guide the sniper down the west wall to take out the machine gun emplacement near the two searchlights. Move him back to the others and then edge him out east, targeting the troops manning the AA batteries.

Move your lads up to these batteries and proceed to the corner of the building in the northeast. Edge north along the platform, with your sniper leading the way. When the area is secure, enter the building to discover the pilots have been moved – again.

Exit the building and shoot the soldier in the tower overlooking the transformer station. Use the map options to make the explosion on the tanker coincide

with the destruction of the transformer. Escape during the confusion after the explosions.



ⓘ Only set the explosives when the area is clear of troops.

PHOENIX FALL

Move a sniper into the hills and kill any soldiers hanging about. Move him to the flat-crested summit overlooking the ruined farm and take out the patrolling soldiers. Move the rest of your team through the valley leading to the buildings and position them along the ridge. Reposition your sniper onto the hill to the east that's closest to the wrecked bridge. Clear the area and get your bazooka/explosives expert to dash in and destroy the armoured wagons. If you run out of bazookas, finish them off with timed explosives.



ⓘ Blow up the armoured wagons with either timed explosives or the bazooka.

A WINNING TEAM

First of all, it's worth noting that most missions can be completed with a standard team consisting of one sniper, one machine gunner and two utility soldiers. Here's a brief explanation of each role



Sniper

He is probably your most important asset as it's up to him to clear areas for the shorter-range machine gunners. The perfect sniper should have a high shooting ability and a good stealth rating. Try Robin 'Hood' Smedley – he's one of the best around.



Machine gunner

These grizzly warriors should have excellent reactions as well as good shooting skills. They are best used in close combat situations, such as taking over specific rooms. William 'Mad' Calvert is a good choice as he won't let you down.



Utility soldier

A good all-rounder whose main job is to provide cover for the sniper and machine gunner. They need to be strong enough to carry scavenged weapons from the battlefield. Jiri 'Butcher' Trebissky and Chester 'Fairbairn' Ranking are your main men.

CAMPAIGN TWO OPERATION SILVER GATE, YUGOSLAVIA

BROKEN KNIFE

Gather everybody together and head for the farmhouse to the north. Now storm the L-shaped guard post to the east, making sure you rob the dead of all their weapons. Go further east and let your sniper start on the next guard post, with the rest providing back-up. And that's it – head up the path to the bridge and safety, maybe...



Ⓜ A high sniper can offer excellent cover.

INTO THE DARKNESS

Select any soldier and run like hell. Hang a left at the first junction and run down the right-hand side of the street until you reach an alley. Go down here, hang a left at the park, through the alley, across the street, and then down the alley opposite. Steal all four sets of clothes and head back to your comrades. Give them the disguises, get in the car, and drive to the inn on the island. Quietly kill the grunt guarding the boat, sneak aboard and escape down river. However, be warned: if you shoot this soldier with any gun, the noise is likely to alert the soldiers in the inn who will come running.



Ⓜ Take the clothes back to your squad to wear as disguises.

TREE AT THE END OF THE GARDEN

Disembark early on the left bank. Spray the distant dock area with machine gun bullets – this wild long-range attack often kills a few unsuspecting and unprotected soldiers. Use your sniper to take out any others in range. Move closer, watching for the snipers atop the water towers and guards at the far end of the road. Dart among the buildings and eliminate any soldiers on the bridge (a few cross from the opposite bank). Finally, climb in the tank and shoot the lock gate. Flee to the exit point on the opposite bank from where you started the mission.



Ⓜ The tank is the only way to blow a hole in the lock gate.

GRAVE ON MOUNTAINS

Cross the nearby ford, and use a sniper to kill the machine gunner to the northeast. Move the entire group up to the barbed wire, and use the sniper again to pop the machine gunner to the northeast as well as any other soldiers you

can find. Crawl forward and jump in the bunker. Slowly advance through the bunker complex, using grenades and machine guns, until you reach the exit in the east.



Ⓜ The bunkers are no problem as long as you take it slowly and keep your head down.

LAST COURTESY

Move everybody into the big barn opposite. Place two soldiers on each opening and let them blast the oncoming army. When the plane arrives, make a dash for it and fly to safety.



Ⓜ Use the guns on the plane to kill any remaining soldiers.

CAMPAIGN 3

OPERATION FIEND'S CALL, GERMANY

FIRE PORTAL

Sneak along the hedges until you see a house beyond an opening on the right. Shoot the officer on the balcony, then creep towards the front door. Once inside, prepare for an onslaught. Soldiers dash down the stairs and must be dealt with in flamboyant machine gun style. Secure each room one

by one and head up to the archive room via a winding staircase at the end of the passage, on the left of the entrance. Use timed explosives to destroy each room, and head down to the basement. Kill the guards, take their key and rescue the pilots. Order them to follow you to the truck parked at the front of the house to escape.



Ⓜ Be prepared for large groups of soldiers appearing from nowhere.

TRAP KEY

Snipe out the garden, making sure you kill the soldier next to the searchlight in particular, and then burst into the house via the French windows. Perform an efficient SAS-style capture of each room with grenades and machine gun fire. Work your way up to Steiner and shoot his bodyguard. Providing you've killed every soldier in the house, the mission will be over.



Ⓜ Steiner helps you when every soldier in the villa has been killed.

VIPER'S NEST

Let Steiner escape, shoot the incoming soldiers and then move towards the main development area – but don't go in. Shoot the barrels next to the attacking

troops and that should set off a chain reaction that destroys a large part of the enemy force. Pick off the remains with a sniper and machine gunner, and head to the exit point in the northeast.



Ⓜ A cataclysmic explosion leaves the way virtually free for you to escape.

ESCAPE FROM HELL

There are plenty of towers around so let your sniper show his worth. Use the rest of the squad to protect him and move slowly through the base taking out the tower occupants one by one. When you arrive at the car park, blow open the double doors with a panzerfaust (rocket launcher), jump in a half-track, and away you go.



Ⓜ Take out the gunners in the towers or die. Fast.

CLOSE FIRE

Zoom past the first lot of defences, letting the gunner on your half-track take care of business. Stop just before you exit the woods and skirt a couple of bazooka-carrying members around the shoreline to line up a good shot at the tanks. Bring up

BOTTLENECK TACTIC

Whenever a building is mentioned in a briefing, you can be pretty sure it's packed full of enemy troops. To stop these reinforcements entering the fight, position a machine gunner outside the front door so he can mow down the whole lot as they pour out.



There's no escape.

VEHICLE INSURANCE

Don't forget to take advantage of the cars, half-tracks, tanks and trucks the Germans carelessly leave lying around. They always provide a fair amount of extra armour, and usually carry big guns. There are disadvantages, of course. If a bazooka or something similar hits the vehicle, everybody inside dies – instantly. If you've got the whole team in there, that's a major problem.



For getting around town.



For serious irritations.



For surprise attacks.



For the quick escape.

the half-track to collect them and burn away. Keep stopping occasionally to deal with towers and other tanks when they appear. Other than that, stay in your vehicle and follow the road around to the exit.



Half-tracks aren't always as safe as they look, especially if there's a tank nearby.

CRYSTAL FALCON

After about three minutes the enemy arrive, so you have to work fast... Dash to the Catalina and pick up the mines and other weapons located there. Run back to the half-track and disperse mines around it. Man the first heavy machine gun, and the one beside the building nearer the plane. Position the sniper on a hill overlooking the whole area and then take control of the final man yourself to ensure all the tanks are destroyed. After you've won this massive battle, board the plane to end the mission.



Mines and bazookas can be found in the crates.

CAMPAIGN FOUR

OPERATION SIGN OF THE CROSS, NORWAY

THOR'S HAMMER

Once again, it's important to keep a close eye on those pesky towers. Use the standard sniper method to advance to the power station. When you get there, lay the two radio beacons in the specified locations, and then lead your team to the exit on the west road.



When the two radio transmitters are in place, evacuate and wait for the air strike.

SNOW DEMON

Move along the ridge towards the east until you reach the slope down into the base. Position two machine gunners at the top, and use your sniper to pick off the soldiers as they sprint towards you. Shoot the guard at the base of the radio mast with the sniper and then send a team of two over to lay the explosives.

At the same time, send the other members into the lab to blow that up. If you time the explosions so that they go off together, you shouldn't have too much of a problem stealing a truck to escape.

THIRTEENTH CHAMBER

Toss a grenade over the wall to kill the soldiers on the other side. Carefully enter the compound and secure the outside section. Move two soldiers inside (one with the explosives) and work your way through to the green pressure tanks. Place the explosives and retreat. Back outside, the remaining two soldiers will deal with anyone running towards the sound of the explosion, making it easy for you to escape in the truck.

VOLVEN HUNTERS

Use the sniper to take out the soldiers patrolling outside and then enter the base. Carefully work your way through to the Commander in the southwest corner, and then shoot him after he's disabled the alarm. Take the key from the table and head east to the corridor leading to the next mission.



If you don't kill the commander, he turns the alarm back on as soon as you leave the room.



If you don't destroy the guards with grenades, you die.



HUNT FOR THE GOLDEN FISH

The best way to storm the submarine dock is to burst in using two teams. The first unit should enter in a half-track through the main doors, while the other team should simultaneously sneak in through the side door. Lay the charges on the torpedoes on the bow of the sub, and then use a truck to escape back towards the start of the previous mission.



⚡ We all live in a yellow submarine...

CAMPAIGN FIVE

OPERATION BABYLON, NORTH SEA

BABYLON

Basic search and destroy. Use all your skills and head to the very



Down, down, deeper and down. That's the status quo here.

bottom of the boat for the code machine. It's best to stick to machine guns in here, as grenades can cause a few problems due to the large amounts of torpedoes. When you have the code machine, head back to the dinghy on the destroyer's bow.

CAMPAIGN SIX

OPERATION WRATH OF GODS, CZECHOSLOVAKIA

KING'S ROAD

Enemy snipers are the main

problem — they reside on roofs and in the church tower.

Position your sniper up high to deal with them. When you reach the Tiger tank in the square, simply run under its gun. If your sniper has eliminated the soldiers on the balconies to the east and on the hill, the route to the exit along the northeast road should be fairly clear. Oh, and remember: if the captured scientist dies, it's game over — only move him into the open when you're completely sure it's safe.



⚡ Enemy snipers can cause serious havoc if your own sniper's not up to the job.

LAST MAN TAKES IT ALL

Take as many snipers as possible with assault rifles as secondary weapons. Head slowly but surely towards the north end of the western runway and wait for the plane to land. Keep the scientist covered and then board the plane to complete the game. ⚡



⚡ Your main threat is from guns such as these. Destroy them as soon as you can.

MAP OPTIONS

More than just a map, this detailed screen allows you to coordinate your attacks. It's important that you learn how to use this option effectively because the further into the game you progress, the more you need to rely on it to succeed.



Don't underestimate the importance of your map.



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OI YOU! NO!

Q I'm writing in response to Steve Lee's letter in your August issue (PCZ #79), where he was worried whether he'd lose the entire contents of his hard drive if he uninstalled a first-person perspective game he'd read about in a magazine. (He wasn't sure which game, but it was *Half-Life* as it turns out.)

I just thought I'd point out that if you are worried that uninstall won't do the job properly, it's simple to delete things manually using Windows Explorer. Admittedly, this can leave items in the Start menu that are no longer there, but even these are removed by simply right-clicking on the taskbar.

Phillip Roebuck

A No, no, no! Attempting to manually remove games – or, indeed, any installed software – in this way is really not a good idea. When you install a game, the set-up program puts the bulk of the files into a directory of your choosing but also into other places, such as the Windows



Are all these uninstalling bugs just an urban Myth or what?

In theory, you can reverse all the changes manually if a) you're a Windows expert, and b) you know exactly what's been changed. In practice,

Registry is very bad news for system speed) and run the risk of having an unstable system.

Our advice to readers deleting software, except in truly exceptional circumstances, is to *always* use the removal software supplied with the game itself, or the Uninstall component of Windows, or a commercial utility such as Norton Cleansweep or WinDelete Deluxe (the likes of which will help you track down junk files). For the record, as far as

we're aware, the only games with fatally bugged uninstall routines are *Myth II* (early American editions only) and, as covered last month, *Half-Life* (v.1.0.0.6 or earlier).

“On my address window on my Internet browser there's a list of all the addresses I've visited. Is there any way to clear it?”

DOES DAVID SCOTT HAVE SOMETHING TO HIDE?

System directory. Moreover, the set-up process normally makes changes to system files, such as the Registry.

however, you'll almost certainly miss something. As such, you'll probably waste disk space, slow down your PC (a messy

LEAST FAVOURITE

Q Ever get bugged by that Favourites menu in the start menu of Windows 98? Well, here's how to get rid of it.

First, go to Start menu, select Run and type in regedit (that starts the Registry editor).

Now go to HKEY_CURRENT

£50
WINNER!

BURNING DESIRE

Q I'm writing regarding the 'Wonderwall' letter in your September issue (PCZ #80) from the chap trying to play multiplayer games through a firewall. As you so adroitly pointed out, the short answer is "You can't". The medium answer (as you pointed out with equal aplomb) is "Firewalls are there to stop people like you from doing things like that".

The long answer (from me) is: "In general, you can't, but in certain circumstances you might be able to play some games." You're not going to get anywhere with a 'fix' (after all, the firewall's working as it's supposed to, so you can't really 'fix' it), so to have any chance of making it work, you need to know a bit about how TCP/IP works.

At the risk of getting all boring and technical, here goes...

Every nerd knows that everything has a unique

address on the Internet (its IP address). However, in order to be able to communicate with another computer, you need more than this. Essentially, you need to talk to a particular program on the other machine (a *Half-Life* server, for instance).

The other machine is probably running loads of programs at the same time, so it needs some way of knowing which program you're trying to talk to. In order to keep them all straight, it gives each program a different 'ticket', known as a 'port number'. So to talk to a remote machine (again, a *Half-Life* server, for example), you need to know its IP address (or its name, at least), and also the 'ticket' number for the *Half-Life* server program it's running.

The good news is that each program (*Quake*, *Half-Life*, whatever) assigns a default port number (*Half-Life*, for example, might be 27015, whereas Web servers are

normally on port 80). The bad news is that normally it can be altered by the server administrator (this is to allow more than one server on a single machine, each with a different port number).

Firewalls can look at your attempts to surf the Net, and can decide whether to let you through, basing their decision on more than just IP addresses. That is, they can block specific ports as well. So it may be that your firewall is only letting 'normal' Net traffic through – Web on port 80, FTP on 21 and 20, for example. If that's the case, you've had it, unless you can persuade your firewall administrator to allow traffic on the ports for your game (which you can probably find from the manual or FAQ).

Your only other option is if your firewall is running something called 'socks'. This is a fairly common firewall thing – it's a way of letting all sorts of traffic through the firewall without putting the internal network at risk. If

_USER/Software/Microsoft/Windows/CurrentVersion/Policies/Explorer. To open, click the right mouse button and select Expand.

Now right-click in the right-hand pane of Regedit, select New, then DWORD Value and press Enter. When the value appears, enter the name NoFavouritesMenu. Change the value of NoFavouritesMenu to 1. Click OK and exit regedit. When you reboot... voilà!

"PAL2468"

A We can't say the Favourites 'problem' has been keeping us awake at night, but there may be someone out there who is bothered about such things. As always, readers should use Regedit at their own risk. Remember – the Windows Registry is quite a scary thing.

some circumstances), but the simple fact is that there's a risk of frying your components. How big is the risk exactly? It's impossible to say. Nevertheless, we don't want any part of it. So no more letters on over-clocking please.

PESKY

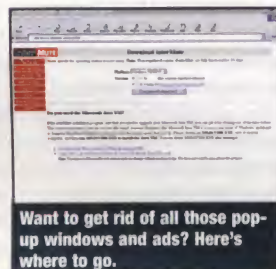
A I have found a really cool program for the Net. It's called InterMute and you can get it from www.intermute.com.

What does it do? It starts up when you connect to the Internet and gets rid of those pesky pop-up windows and adverts. It also blocks out animated gifs and stuff. It's great! You can get a free trial version which lasts for around 90 days.

ModoX

A Yeah, nice tip. Another month and you might have won yourself £50. Still, seeing your name (of sorts) in print is enough, isn't it? Isn't it?

Incidentally, the trial version of InterMute lasts just 14 days. The full version costs \$19.95.



Want to get rid of all those pop-up windows and ads? Here's where to go.

I have an AMD K6-2 400 chip and would like to clock it up to 500MHz. Is this safe? If not, how high can I clock it? My motherboard can go up to 550MHz so that's not a problem. Is it worth doing at the risk of burning out?

Peter Allen

A In one word: No! Or at least we at PC ZONE don't think so. As we've explained on several occasions over the past couple of years (and this really is the final time), we flatly refuse to advocate over-clocking system processors (or for that matter graphic processors).

Sure, it can be done (in

DISC ERROR

A I buy quite a few games and am starting to get annoyed. Why? Because most games require the CD to sit in its drive in order to play them. I don't mind this much, but it would be better if the box were to state whether you need a CD in each machine for multiplayer games. Otherwise, I

have to spend £35 on a game which I can only play in single-player mode.

Why can't other games be like Blizzard's *WarCraft* and *StarCraft*? That is, with a single CD in the server, three others can compete in multiplayer games without each PC needing a disc in the CD-ROM drive.

Albert Ray-Boss

A We reckon most companies probably hold the opinion that if a group of people want to play a game (be it in single or multiplayer mode), they should all pay at least something for the privilege.

We can see their point, although it's unlikely that a group of, say, four friends will all buy the same game. Your best bet is to try to pick up extra copies second-hand or on budget release.

As you've mentioned, a few companies (including

Blizzard with the titles you mention) allow multiple installs of the network elements of a game and, when appropriate, we do try to mention this fact in the review.

HISTORY LESSON

A On my address window on my Internet browser, there's a drop-down list of all the addresses that I've previously visited. Is there any way I can clear this, since there seems to be no end to the entries it's stored?

David Scott

A Hmm... got something to hide, have we? It all depends on the browser you're using, but check under Preferences/Options (or look in Help) for the History and Cache settings.

SIGH!

A In your May issue (PCZ #76), I noticed a letter from a reader who said that your mag

ran a guide on how to reformat your hard drive. I have just started reading PC ZONE and am sticking with it because it's funny and cheap. Could you please send me a guide on how to do this?

Oilly B-A

A Arrrgghh! Every month, under the bit on the left-hand side of the opposite pages that says "Come in, sit down", there's text which quite clearly explains that we cannot give personal replies, be it by post, email or phone.

And yet every single month we receive requests for... personal replies! Sorry, but we simply don't have the resources or time for individual responses. No, really. So no more requests – please!

As for reformatting your hard drive, Oilly, there was a feature called "How to... clean up your PC" in PCZ #68. Back issues are available from 01789 490215. ☹



StarCraft: play it with your friends with just one CD.

you're running socks, you probably would have had to enter something into your browser configuration as the 'socks server'. Or you could impress your firewall guy by asking this question. While you're at it, ask if it's socks version 4 or socks version 5. The latter is much more gamer-friendly (for really boring technical reasons involving UDP).

Anyway, if the firewall is running socks, it will allow any application (ie a game) to run through the firewall – as long as the game is 'socksified' (Is that a technical term too? – Ed). So the question is: how do you socksify a game? Well, you can't – not directly, anyway. But you can socksify Windows, so that everything Windows runs will work through the firewall.

To do this, you need to download a bit of code called a 'shim', or a 'socksifier'. The two most famous are Hummingbird (www.hummingbird.com) and Sockscap (www.socks.nec.com). Download one, and follow the

instructions carefully. Very carefully. And then read them again. Assuming that (a) you've done it right and (b) the firewall supports socks 4 for a TCP game and socks 5 for a UDP game (don't ask, just look in the manual or FAQ), then this is your best chance of getting it working.

Before you start, I recommend you back up your configuration, using the hints in September's PC ZONE (issue #80). Whenever you hack around with Windows' network stack, there's the chance of something failing in a spectacular manner. While we're not talking about disasters of biblical proportions, it might involve a bit of sweat, toil and tears to get your network connection back.

I know this is the absolute minimum information you need to get it working, but a proper answer would probably take up a couple of pages. However,

I do know what I'm talking about – this sort of stuff is actually part of my job. But you've probably already guessed that...

Paul Jennings

A Yeah, we're glad to hear this stuff is your job, Paul. If it were your hobby, we'd be seriously concerned about your social life. Huge thanks for taking the trouble to write such a long explanation.

We have a feeling that it won't help the author of the original letter. I mean, if you were a university network administrator, would you leave any loopholes? Nevertheless, there are bound to be a number of office workers up and down the country who can take advantage of your advice. As such, we fully expect Britain's GDP to fall next month. And Paul, your bank balance will be swelling by £50. Cheers.

WATCHDOG

Much reader anger this month – most of it aimed squarely at Localtel, the company behind Screaming.net...

★ ANSWERED BY Adam Phillips

LIVING IN A WORLD OF HURT?

We're here to help. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line. But please remember that technical issues are not covered by Watchdog – if you've got a techie problem, write to Dear Wazza (page 122).

WRITE TO Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.

EMAIL us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog'.

“It is impossible to get connected off-peak. You can sit at your machine for well over half an hour trying to get a connection to no avail. Forget using it over the weekend”

MAXWELL

FROM A WHISPER TO A SCREAM

After printing a letter about BT's local call rate policy, we received a deluge of responses about Screaming.net, a service that offers free local calls in the evenings and at weekends. Most were rabid complaints from hacked-off punters. Here are just two of the many letters we received

SCREAM 1

Here's a copy of my letter to Localtel/Screaming.net.

Dear Sirs,

I wish to complain about your wholly unacceptable service, both for my telephone and through your Screaming.net ISP. It is the worst service I have ever experienced – for anything! The service is so poor, it breaks the terms of our contract...

My complaints are:

1) Slow ISP: my download speed is around 1Kps and rarely goes above 1.5Kps. It frequently drops below 0.1kps. The speed should be at least 4Kps using my 56K modem.

2) Slow connect speed: my modem is connecting at 37-40K. I am certain this is due to a poor line card that is not good for modem use on my line/exchange. Please replace this with a better card immediately.

3) Busy ISP: it takes me up to 250 redials to connect to the ISP (usually around 30 redials).

4) Busy phones: I can never get through to Localtel on any number as lines are always busy. I last managed to get through two months ago.

5) Disconnects: the ISP now disconnects me every two hours.

6) Extra services: I requested extra services (eg "friends and family") on your website around two months ago. I have still not been contacted about this.

7) Erroneous billing: I spoke to one of your staff two months ago to request an amendment to your charges, as you had billed me for days when I was not a customer. This was agreed, but I was still charged the full amount.

JS Hayre

SCREAM 2

When I heard Screaming.net gives free online use at off-peak times and doesn't charge for the phone call, I thought it was to be my wallet's saviour. But be

warned – there are more catches than in your grandad's 60-year-old jumper.

First, you have to sign your BT phone account over to them. In my case, they billed me for three months of line rental which I haven't had – a clerical error that will be deducted from my next bill.

Second, it is impossible to get connected off-peak. You can try for well over half an hour to get a connection to no avail. Forget using it over the weekend – unless you have over an hour spare to get connected!

Third, the so-called free service costs 50p per minute for any support. When half the discs do not finish configuring your PC, it becomes expensive when you are put on hold for over ten minutes (£5) and finally have to ring back because you've been lost by the telephonist.

Fourth, the amount of lag and downtime the server suffers from make it impossible to play games – especially as it kicks you out when it gets too busy.

And finally, they are having huge problems with lost emails because of some sort of corruption at their end.

I feel the service is a step in the right direction, but they have a long way to go before they get anywhere near the level of competence and service that other servers offer.

Maxwell

PS I have found out that Screaming.net's policy is to kick you off-line regardless of what you are doing after two hours – even if you are in the process of downloading files. I can't get the latest version of QuickTime or Realplayer as the download time is too long.

Watchdog sent these letters and others to Localtel. First, they pointed out that the complaints "seem to be fairly old, as many of the situations mentioned have been

addressed and have improved vastly". They then went on to address specific problems:

Connectivity

"Since the launch of the service, the requirement for extra lines has been far in excess of our original expectations. This has resulted in the necessity for our customers to have to redial at an unacceptable level to connect to the service. Over the past three weeks, enough lines have been added to make a first-time connection the norm rather than the exception, and there is clear evidence that our customers are beginning to see significant improvements in the service. Having said that, it seems that certain parts of the country are finding it more difficult to connect than others and this is being looked at by BT. The yardstick for any ISP is the number of minutes of usage in any one month. Screaming.net has gone from a standing start to over 100,000,000 minutes in four months."

Slow connection speeds

"Speeds of 37-40K (as per Mr Hayre) are below the experience of our regular testers, but there may be circumstances where line speeds are artificially low. In some cases, BT will provision DACS, or split lines into buildings where multiple lines are required (apartment buildings, home offices or where second lines are required). This often results in deterioration, to the point where the line is unusable for Internet connection. It's probably worth getting BT's official line on this."

Download speeds

"Download speeds can be affected by a number of factors, but we are aware that speeds from US sites can be improved on. Currently, speeds from European sites are consistent with the best in the business, but

we hope to achieve industry standard download speeds within the next few weeks."

Two-hour activity time-out

"A two-hour activity time-out was introduced about four weeks ago. The immediate result was an increase in unique dial-ups of over 60%. The initial reaction from customers was fairly negative but, given the increased access to the service, we are now seeing some very positive feedback. We are not disallowing free time online but merely cutting it up into two-hour chunks to help more people use the service."

Customer services

"The number of calls being presented to us is coming down every week. There is no doubt that the number of agents available to customers has been unacceptable, but we failed to foresee that BT would delay the provision of service, disconnect customers during the transfer period and fail to provide the requested services (Call Minder, Caller Display, etc) to the extent that we are receiving far more calls than we originally planned for. A new call centre is due to open in late September, which will guarantee improved answer times. In the meantime, we are reliant on BT's performance during the transfer period."

Billing

"Billing is another area where we have made recent improvements. Inaccurate bills have initially come from bad data received from BT but, as far as we are aware, credits are being issued to affected customers."

● Watchdog will forward all Localtel's responses to BT and will publish their response in the next issue. Any readers who are still having problems should drop us a line.

ANTI-VIRAL PROBLEM

Q I recently bought a copy of *Streetwars* from Studio 3 (Infogrames). The installation went without a hitch, but when it came to running the game, the executable seemed to hang.

This problem has been reported to Infogrames on their discussion board. The response from a QA representative at Infogrames was: "First, you need to ensure that there are *no* virus checkers on your machine. Virus checkers such as *AVP*, *Norton*, *McAfee* etc should all be removed from your system before running *Streetwars*."

It seems that having an anti-virus program installed is not recommended by Infogrames. What are they on? Can you please help me make them see sense and understand the consumer requires that any product running on a PC must be compatible with an AV tool.

By the way, the AV in question is the latest version of *McAfee* for Windows 98.

Richard Trembecki

A You're absolutely right, Richard – any self-respecting punter these days must have some form of anti-virus prog on their PC to avoid infections. Perturbed by your allegation that Infogrames were telling gamers not to have an AV tool installed when running *Streetwars*, we approached their PR bod, Nick Clarkson, to glean Infogrames' official spin on the situation.

"There seems to be some confusion between what your reader has reported and what advice our customer support actually recommends," Nick offered. "Usually, virus checkers cause no trouble if they are running in the background and, for the record, Infogrames unreservedly recommend the use of virus detection software."

He continued: "However, should customers contact our customer support line, they will be asked a series of questions to determine the exact nature of their problem. This will include a number of hardware and software checks. Usually the problem will be solved without turning off software running in the background. All our games are designed to be the sole application running under Windows, and sometimes running multiple applications can cause

problems. In such circumstances, customers will be asked to turn off their anti-virus software to see if there is any conflict with the system resources. Should the anti-virus software be causing an error with one of the games, the customer is asked to *disable it while playing their game and then re-enable it when they have finished. This does not mean customers should completely uninstall their anti-virus software – they should merely stop it from running in the background.*"

★ Hmm, a fair answer, but it still doesn't explain the posting that Infogrames reportedly posted, Richard...

UNREAL OFF-LINE

Q I have a dilemma. I specifically bought *Unreal* to be able to play online and get my ass kicked. I loved it – it's a great game. Then a number of patches surfaced which made the online game even better and I'm now running version 223. However, for some unknown reason, I cannot get *Unreal* to upgrade to version 225.

All my computer does is lock up. So I phoned GTI technical support and, after a few suggestions which didn't work, I was told that they do not offer technical support on patches. Excellent! I now have a useless game which I can't play online because it's not the most up-to-date version.

Where do GTI get off by not offering technical help on patches? What am I supposed to do now? Be content with playing the single-player game or botmatches forever? *Unreal* was advertised as being multiplayer over the Internet, yet now it seems I can't multiplayer with my version. I am tempted to contact Trading Standards over this but, before I do, I would welcome GTI's comments on the matter as the technical support department just say: "We do not offer technical support for patches."

Mark Hewstone

A While *Half-Life* may have proverbially trounced all over *Unreal*, GTI's minor classic is still very popular online. When Watchdog contacted GTI, they came back with the following curt reply: "226 will be available shortly. Send him *Unreal XP*, as this will upgrade his old version."

Hmm... no apologies there then, but hopefully a solution

will be available in the not-too-distant future. Keep an eye on the *Unreal* site for the aforementioned patch...

MORE BT MOANS

Q I read with interest the reply from BT when questioned on the subject of free local call rates for Internet access. While I understand that the American market is very different to the UK's, I feel that BT could be a lot more flexible with their approach to pricing.


For instance, when you buy a mobile phone, you have a choice of tariffs so you can pick one that best suits the way you use it – why can't we have a similar system from BT? I'm sure most Net users wouldn't mind paying extra for long distance calls or more line rental, so that they could have free or cheaper local calls. That way, others wouldn't have to subsidise Net users as they could keep their existing tariff rates.

Let's face it – as long as BT are making so much money from Net users, they are hardly going to cut costs a great deal.

Roger Eastaff

A Yet more harsh words for the company that most Net users appear to love to loathe. We took your suggestion to BT to get their view on what appears to be a rather practical and sensible idea. "Internet users can already take advantage of reductions of up to 35 per cent off the cost of dialling their ISP using a combination of BT's range of discount packages," commented a spokesperson for the company. "Price tariffs are under constant review by BT through the desire to meet customer demand in a rapidly evolving market."

Pushing the marketing-speak to one side, though, what about Roger's proposal, then? "The current funding formulae governing call revenues mean that it is the call 'terminating' operators and ISPs who, in reality, control the access market. BT, as an 'originating' call operator, can create innovative tariffs for Internet access, but unless ISPs want to use these prices, they will not be widely available to Net surfers."

So it would seem that it's up to the ISPs to exploit the situation for the customer's benefit. Letters of outrage to the usual email address... 

PCZONE

COMING NEXT ISSUE

THE NOMAD SOUL & TOMB RAIDER IV



David Bowie and Lara Croft head the cast in next month's stunning double-bill when we review Quantic Dream's genre-busting 3D action adventure *The Nomad Soul*, and Core's latest in the *Tomb Raider* series, *The Last Revelation*. Both games are hugely anticipated, and you can read exclusive reviews of both of them only in *PC ZONE*.

THE FINEST COVER CD DEMOS

Once again the *PC ZONE* CD will be the one to watch. There's no substitute for quality and next month we can promise a CD so packed with great demos, up-to-date patches and add-ons that you will wonder how we can possibly cram so much onto it. After months of disappointment, we daren't presume the *TA: Kingdoms* demo will appear, but scheduled for appearance are *Phoenix*, *Trickstyle*, *Extreme Biker*, *The Nomad Soul* – all exclusive to *ZONE* – and lots more besides.

HONEST REVIEWS

Next month is going to be a big one for reviews. Following close behind *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation* and *The Nomad Soul*, we will have full reviews of *Battlezone II*, *Pharaoh*, *Phoenix*, *Nocturne* and *Cutthroats*. We'll also tell you what we think of *Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear*, *Prince Of Persia 3D* and the rest of the month's releases.

TIPS, CHEATS AND WALKTHROUGHS

Paul Mallinson has spent the summer indoors (nothing unusual in that) playing through *System Shock 2* for the second time. He'll have the first part of the most in-depth walkthrough you are ever likely to see. Mark Hill is currently on target to finish his solution to *Kingpin* and dearest Keith Pullin will be on hand for the latest cheats. We'll also show you how you could make a living playing games, rather than just get by like we do.

INSIGHTFUL PREVIEWS

With *Half-Life* still the first-person shooter to be reckoned with, we take a look at *Opposing Force*, an add-on that offers more than most sequels. We'll also be taking a test drive of *Grand Prix 3* and *Le Mans* and asking what comes next from *Baldur's Gate* creators Bioware. Other previews include *Project IGI* and *Player Manager 2000/Online*.

ON SALE

THURSDAY 21 OCT

* Note: this is a guide only, content may change due to circumstances beyond our control



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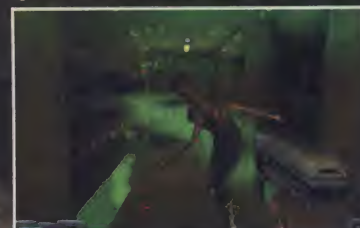
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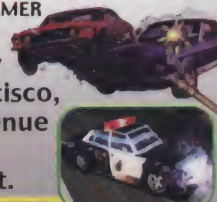


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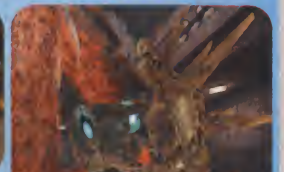


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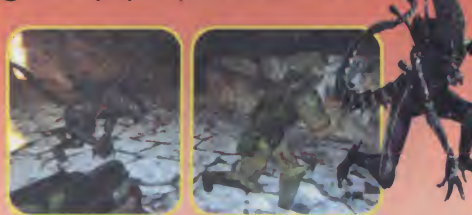
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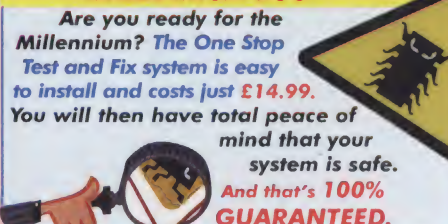
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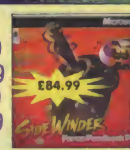
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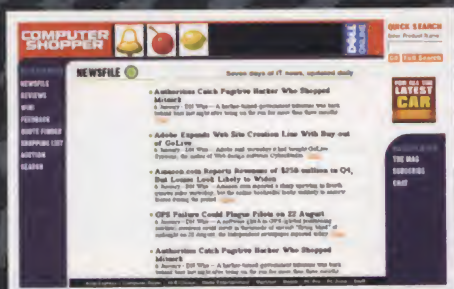
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CHAT

Your technical questions answered

Welcome to the
PC ZONE Top 100. Here
 you'll find the titles
 that, in our expert
 opinion, are the current
 top PC games in their
 field, as well as a few
 extras you might like
 to consider if you're a
 big fan of the genre

ACTION GAMES



QUAKE II

PCZ #59 • 97%

★ The sequel to 'the most important PC game ever' turns out to be more than worth the wait. Despite the odd bit of slowdown, single-player and deathmatch games are in a league of their own. As Macca concluded in his review: "Quake II is pretty much perfect." Buy it now.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



HALF-LIFE

PCZ #71 • 95%

★ Regarded by many as the best game to grace any platform, *Half-Life* set a new standard by which all games are judged. The story development, atmosphere and player involvement have yet to be improved. If you buy one game from this Top 100, buy this one.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209100



FORSAKEN

PCZ #63 • 94%

★ *Descent* is dead and *Forsaken* is now king of the tunnel-based shoot 'em ups. With huge, varied levels, heaps of graphical effects, weapons and a fantastic multiplayer LAN-based game, it's up there with the best of 'em.
PUBLISHER Acclaim • 0171 344 5000



WARGASM

PCZ #71 • 93%

★ Famed for their flight sims, DID finally deliver an action game only they could produce. With helicopters, APCs, and hapless infantry running about, this is as fast-paced as a tank game could be – and it's even better to share.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0181 738 8199



SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOUR DIVISION

PCZ #71 • 92%

★ Half *Quake*, half *MechWarrior*, this 3D action game breathes fresh air into a stale genre. With great graphical effects and an involving storyline, it's perhaps just a bit too easy for the *Quake* hard-core.
PUBLISHER Microïds • 00331 4601 5401



KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME

PCZ #77 • 92%

★ This controversial title should be talked about for its excellent gameplay and graphics rather than its violence and swearing. And the multiplayer aspect should prove fiery opposition to any other game out there.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

PCZ #79 • 91%

★ Strategic shoot 'em ups don't get any harder, or more compelling, than this. Command a troop of men through WWII missions and avoid getting killed. If you're after the next step in *Rainbow Six*-style gaming, this is it.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



TOMB RAIDER III

PCZ #72 • 91%

★ There's a good chance that in 20 years' time the *Tomb Raider* 'thingy' will be looked upon with as much fondness as *Star Wars* is today. This third outing may not be as ground-breaking as its predecessor, but it's the best so far.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000



JEDI KNIGHT/ MYSTERIES OF THE SITH

PCZ #74 • 90%

★ As a double pack, this ageing 3D shooter and its expansion disc represents outstanding value for money. Dated graphics, but the level design is superb and the missions are some of the best ever made.
PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01895 4567000



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

PCZ #81 • 90%

NEW ENTRY Played over a network or the Internet, *UT* is more than a match for *Quake II*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well designed maps and diverse gameplay. There may be no missions, but there's plenty to sink your teeth into.
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

ALSO CONSIDER

THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT Eidos Interactive • PCZ #72 • 90%

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX Take 2 • PCZ #69 • 89%

PRIVATEER 2 Origin/EA • PCZ #44 • 94% **BUDGET**

QUAKE Activision • PCZ #43 • 96% **BUDGET**

ALIENS VS PREDATOR Fox Interactive • PCZ #77 • 91%

REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL Ubi Soft • PCZ #50 • 89%

STARSIEGE UNIVERSE Sierra • PCZ #76 • 88%

SIN Eidos Interactive • PCZ #70 • 91%

RACING GAMES**CARMAGEDDON II** PCZ #69 • 95%

★ It's *that* game again, this time with full 3D pedestrians. More blood, more cars, more tracks – and now with added missions. If you liked the first one, you'll love this one. If you don't, you can just bog off.

PUBLISHER SCI • 0171 585 3308

**TOCA 2** PCZ #76 • 93%

★ Predictably, Codemasters have done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrol heads. Graphically it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it most certainly is.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

**COLIN MCRAE RALLY** PCZ #68 • 93%

★ Sporting an updated *TOCA* engine, *Colin McRae* has become the new benchmark in rally simulations. With car customisability and a heap of multiplayer accessibility, this game should be top of everyone's rally games heap.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

**MONACO GRAND PRIX** PCZ #69 • 92%

★ Essentially this is *F1 Racing Simulation 2*, and an F1 fan's wet dream come true. It looks beautiful, plays even better, and the AI is second to none. You need a hefty machine to have it looking its best though.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 081 944 9000

**GRAND THEFT AUTO** PCZ #58 • 92%

★ This is the game that took over from *Carmageddon* as the media's favourite pet hate. Steal cars, dodge police, mow down pedestrians and cause mayhem in city streets in one of the most addictive driving games ever. *Micro Machines* on acid.

PUBLISHER BMG • 0171 973 0011

**NEED FOR SPEED III** PCZ #69 • 91%

★ Some arcade racing games are fun, but if you like a bit more than just just racing around a few tracks then you should seriously consider *Need For Speed III*. Why? Because if avoiding the law isn't fun, what is?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

**MOTOCROSS MADNESS** PCZ #67 • 91%

★ An astoundingly addictive game. Loads of game and race options and tremendous fun, especially when played with a Microsoft Freestyle Pro pad over a network. Available with the pad for around 50 quid. A must-buy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

**MICRO MACHINES 3** PCZ #64 • 90%

★ The manic miniature racing game gets the 3D treatment and loses nothing along the way. The new power-ups might not please the purist, but *Micro Machines 3* is still one of the finest two-player games around.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

**MIDTOWN MADNESS** PCZ #79 • 90%

★ Drive around Chicago participating in races, annoying the police, or just cruising around. Not quite *Grand Theft Auto 3D*, but just as much fun, this should pull you through until *Driver* is ported from the PlayStation to the PC.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

**BREAKNECK** PCZ #78 • 89%

★ Not only is this the fastest driving game out there, it also has enough options, tracks and vehicles to keep even occasional racers enthralled. Add to this the superb graphics, and you can see why *Breakneck* is a winner.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656

ALSO CONSIDER

FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 MicroProse • PCZ #36 • 95%

SCREAMER 2 Virgin • PCZ #45 • 93% **BUDGET**

DESTRUCTION DERBY 2 Psygnosis • PCZ #46 • 86% **BUDGET**

MOTORHEAD Gremlin Interactive • PCZ #63 • 90%

TOCA: TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Europress • PCZ #59 • 86% **BUDGET**

GRAND PRIX LEGENDS Sierra • PCZ #69 • 90%

SPORTS GAMES**LINKS LS** PCZ #43 • 94%

★ The classic golf sim gets an update, and unsurprisingly it's fab. There's more options, luscious graphics, a redesigned menu and a view selection system. There's even a built-in upgrader for all the old data disk courses you splashed out on.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000

**TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR GOLF** PCZ #69 • 93%

★ Beautifully presented, as always, and sporting a speedy enhanced graphics engine, this latest in the *PGA* series also gets star endorsement by young Tiger Woods. Without question, this is the best golf game yet.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

**NHL 99** PCZ #70 • 92%

★ The problem with all ice hockey games is the confusion that ensues after each ruck. *NHL 99* is no different in that respect, but updated graphics, enhanced AI and spiffy presentation make this game a must for fans of the sport.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

**PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS 97** PCZ #53 • 92%

★ This game doesn't quite better *Super Tennis* on the SNES, but it's as close as you'll get on the PC. The simple control system means it's instantly playable, but we may as well tell you now that the women's skirts still don't fly up when they serve.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

**FIFA 99** PCZ #71 • 92%

★ Another biannual release from EA Sports that, as per usual, is better than the last. You'll have to think long and hard before shelling out another £40, but if you love footie it's well worth it for the best football game available for the PC.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

**SENSIBLE SOCCER EUROPEAN CLUB EDITION** PCZ #69 • 90%

★ It's still top-down, and it's still simple, fast and fun. *World Cup '98* may be prettier, but it can only dream of being as instantly playable as *Sensible Soccer European Club Edition*.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

**VIRTUAL POOL 2** PCZ #58 • 90%

★ Okay, so *Virtual Pool 2* scored one per cent less than its predecessor, but this follow-up beats it hands down. 3Dfx support goes some way to pushing the series further, and the inclusion of English Pub rules make it a more essential purchase than before.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

**THE GOLF PRO** PCZ #62 • 90%

★ If you're bored with either *PGA* or *Links*, then this is the best of the 'mouse-swing' bunch. Good course design and some excellent tuition means there's loads of gameplay, though the putting lets it down a tad.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

**ACTUA SOCCER 3** PCZ #72 • 89%

★ Although better than last year's effort, *Actua 3* fails to snatch the title from EA this time around. Mind you, with a good range of options and a huge range of teams to play against, this certainly has a longer shelf life than *FIFA*.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

**NBA LIVE 99** PCZ #73 • 87%

★ Being an EA Sports title, *NBA Live 99* is, unsurprisingly, the best game in its field. If you're a Sprite-drinking hoop fan, there's plenty here to justify shelling out for the annual upgrade. If you're not, you'll neither know nor care.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

ALSO CONSIDER

★ There's always a swell of different sports game types depending on the current sporting season. These are worth having a look at...

JIMMY WHITE'S 2: CUEBALL Virgin Interactive • PCZ #68 • 88%

MADDEN NFL 99 EA Sports • PCZ #71 • 87%

TRIPLE PLAY 99 Electronic Arts • PCZ #64 • 90%

BRIAN LARA CRICKET Codemasters • PCZ #75 • 85%

ADVENTURE GAMES



BIOFORCE **PCZ #25 • 95%**
 ☆ Futuristic *Alone In The Dark*-style game with impressive graphics, puzzles and soundtrack. Often preferred over *AITD* games as its unique blend of arcade combat is explosive. The only drag is EA's refusal to make a sequel for it.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



SYSTEM SHOCK **PCZ #20 • 95%**
 ☆ This futuristic first-person cyberpunk adventure from the makers of *Ultima* was initially overlooked by many people. Now available on budget, this is a must-buy for those new to the genre. The graphics might be a little dated, but the atmosphere is still invigorating.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS **PCZ #37 • 93%**
 ☆ Follow a post-*Raiders* Indy in his search for the submerged metropolis. Three ways to play make for a high replayability factor, and the inter-character banter is brilliant.
PUBLISHER LucasArts/VE • 0171 368 2255



LBA 2: TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY **PCZ #54 • 93%**
 ☆ TwinSense is back – this time to thwart those pesky Esmerians in this sumptuous sequel. The huge play area in *LBA 2*, coupled with seamlessly linked puzzles, creates a great-looking and hugely atmospheric adventure. A must for adventure fans.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



SAM & MAX **PCZ #11 • 93%**
 ☆ The hilarious dog/rabbit duo's first and only PC outing, in which they need to solve a host of bizarre puzzles. An all-talkie adventure with a gag-laden script, this is an essential budget-priced purchase even if you're not a point-and-click fan.
PUBLISHER LucasArts/VE • 0171 368 2255



DISC WORLD NOIR **PCZ #79 • 90%**
 ☆ Although the adventure genre is almost dead, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive, throwing plot and gameplay surprises at you. Playing a washed-up private eye, you clear your name, find rare artifacts and get the girl.
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791



RESIDENT EVIL II **PCZ #75 • 90%**
 ☆ Not quite as attractive as it could have been, *Resident Evil II* remains one of the most tensely gripping adventure games of recent years. A modicum of simple puzzles, offset by liberal and gratuitous gore make for top entertainment. Be afraid. Be very afraid.
PUBLISHER Virgin • 0171 368 2255



MONKEY ISLAND ADVENTURE PACK **PCZ #74 • 90%**
 ☆ *Monkey Island 1* and *2* are perhaps the finest point-and-clickers ever to grace the PC. The third outing may have been disappointing, but it would be a sin to exclude it from this excellent triple pack.
PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 4567000



GRIM FANDANGO **PCZ #71 • 90%**
 ☆ LucasArts not only do the best adventure games, but have also recently been doing the only adventure games worth buying. This latest has style written all over it, and hopefully signals a rosy future for fans of the genre.
PUBLISHER LucasArts • 0171 368 2255



KING'S QUEST VIII: MASK OF ETERNITY **PCZ #71 • 89%**
 ☆ To mark the genre's transition from point-and-click to a full 3D interface, Sierra's eighth *King's Quest* adventure proves an engaging stopgap, even if it is a little too Americanised. Good but not great.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

ALSO CONSIDER

FULL THROTTLE Virgin • PCZ #27 • 92% **BUDGET**
THE PANDORA DIRECTIVE Virgin • PCZ #43 • 92%
REDGUARD Virgin • PCZ #75 • 89%
GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: THE BEAST WITHIN Cendant • PCZ #36 • 88%
LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE Electronic Arts • PCZ #21 • 93% **BUDGET**
DISC WORLD II GT Psynosis • PCZ #44 • 93%

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES



SYSTEM SHOCK 2 **PCZ #80 • 95%**
 ☆ One of the most compelling gaming experiences to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* mixes heavy RPG and 3D action with adventure elements. In short, a title that's absolutely indispensable for any self-respecting gamer.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



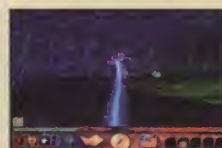
FINAL FANTASY VII **PCZ #66 • 93%**
 ☆ Fearsomely addictive gem of a game of truly epic proportions. Great graphics, plenty of hidden surprises and massive levels will keep you totally absorbed if you forgive the risible dialogue and turn-based combat.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000



REALMS OF THE HAUNTING **PCZ #47 • 93%**
 ☆ Although overlooked by many fans of the genre, our Mallo gave it a whopping 93 per cent when he reviewed it back in Issue 47. Still well worth a look if you happen to see it going cheap, *ROTH* is a well cool mix of adventure and RPG.
PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601



ONLINE ONLY ULTIMA ONLINE **PCZ #80 • 92%**
 ☆ In many ways an old-school RPG, but with amazing freedom, depth and open-endedness. So addictive that *ZONE* editor Chris has sold his car, his house and his soul to finance a permanent Web connection.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



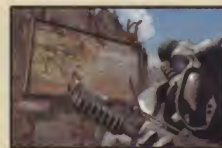
LANDS OF LORE III **PCZ #74 • 90%**
 ☆ Westwood know how to tell a good story, and this latest in the series is the best of the lot. Combine that with ease of use and some highly polished artwork, and you'll find *LOLIII* a great alternative to more traditional RPG efforts.
PUBLISHER Westwood/EA • 01753 549442



ULTIMA VII **PCZ #3 • 89%**
 ☆ Arguably the best of all the *Ultima* games, *Ultima VII* blends character interaction and the exploration of the world of Britannia. The last *Ultima* series to give complete party control. Check out the *Ultima Collection* for a real treat.
PUBLISHER Origin/EA • 01753 549442



DIABLO **PCZ #48 • 88%**
 ☆ Standard hack 'n' slash fare, but pulled off with such style that it's addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game.
PUBLISHER Zabalac/Blizzard • 01626 332233



FALLOUT 2 **PCZ #71 • 86%**
 ☆ Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you like the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



BALDUR'S GATE **PCZ #73 • 85%**
 ☆ With every developer 'going 3D' these days, it's refreshing to find an old-school RPG that combines traditional D&D role-playing with sumptuous 2D graphics. *Baldur's Gate* is intelligent and involving in equal measures.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666



ONLINE ONLY EVERQUEST **PCZ #80 • 85%**
 ☆ If you find *Ultima Online* too vast, *EverQuest* may be the online RPG for you. It's far more combat-orientated than *Ultima*, with captivating monsters and loads of visual candy. Its graphics are 3D, but the gameplay is a bit linear.
PUBLISHER Sony (sold at Electronic Boutique only) • 0171 637 7911

ALSO CONSIDER

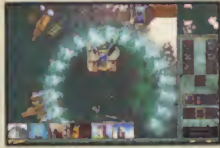
☆ These are the cream of the crop, largely because RPGs have taken a back seat in the past couple of years. But there's also...
ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS Origin/EA • PCZ #1 • 94%
TERRIS AOL • PCZ #44 • 88%
DIABLO: HELLFIRE Cendant • PCZ #59 • 82%
ULTIMA COLLECTION Electronic Arts • PCZ #62 • 90%
RAVENLOFT: STONE PROPHET Mindscape • PCZ #25 • 78%

STRATEGY GAMES

**DUNGEON KEEPER 2** PCZ #79 • 94%

★ *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea. *DK2* takes the essence of the original game, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and doses the myriad of features with a wise hand. And it keeps us very happy indeed.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

**TA: KINGDOMS** PCZ #78 • 94%

★ *TA* puts on a pointy hat and grows a six-foot beard for this long-awaited sequel. Don't be put off by the fantasy setting, this is a real strategy masterpiece. From the gorgeous animation to the AI, *Kingdoms* exudes class.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

**AGE OF EMPIRES** PCZ #54 • 94%

★ Imagine *Civilization II*'s great empire-building gameplay improved with some excellent graphical touches and comprehensive multi and single-player options (all in real time). That's *Age Of Empires* in a nutshell.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

**CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3** PCZ #73 • 93%

★ No fancy graphics, no sound and no online multiplayer options do nothing to hide the fact that *Champ Manager 3* is one of the most addictive games you'll ever play. Forty quid for a season ticket to nirvana? Bloody bargain, mate.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000

**POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING** PCZ #70 • 92%

★ The original *Populous* was the game that put Bullfrog into orbit and made Peter Molyneux one of the biggest names in the industry. Now Peterless, the new Bullfrog team show that they can do just as well without him.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

**MAGIC & MAYHEM** PCZ #70 • 92%

★ Based on the old Spectrum game *Chaos*, *X-COM* creators Mythos deliver a diverse and original fantasy strategy game. A strong single-player element and a manic multiplayer game make this a well-deserving classic.

PUBLISHER Virgin • 0171 368 2255

**SIMCITY 3000** PCZ #74 • 92%

★ Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and newbies alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442

**SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI** PCZ #74 • 92%

★ *Civilization II* was, and still is, one of the greatest strategy games ever made, and *Alpha Centauri* is everything a true sequel should be. Rather than create another remake, Sid Meier has created the game *Civ* fans have been crying out for for years.

PUBLISHER Firaxis/EA • 01753 549442

**C&C: TIBERIAN SUN** PCZ #81 • 90%

NEW ENTRY Perhaps not as stunning as one might have hoped after a three-year wait, *Tiberian Sun* is truly a great game. Pushing the *Command & Conquer* genre to its limits, it gives PC strategists immense depth, detail and variety.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

**WARZONE 2100** PCZ #75 • 90%

★ Both Westwood and Cavedog have dismissed full 3D in strategy games on the grounds that AI would suffer as a result of incorporating it. *Warzone* proves them both wrong, looks gorgeous and plays as good as *Total Annihilation*.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

ALSO
CONSIDER

WARLORDS III: DARKLORDS RISING Broderbund • PCZ #67 • 90%

BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION MicroProse • PCZ #78 • 89%

COMMANDOS Eidos Interactive • PCZ #66 • 87%

DUNGEON KEEPER Electronic Arts • PCZ #53 • 96% **BUDGET**

X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE MicroProse • PCZ #52 • 95%

CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER Activision • PCZ #75 • 89%

CAESAR III Sierra • PCZ #70 • 92%

TOTAL ANNIHILATION GT Interactive • PCZ #56 • 92%

FLIGHT SIMULATION GAMES

**FALCON 4.0** PCZ #72 • 95%

★ After waiting literally years for this, the wait was worth it. With 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure, *Falcon 4.0* can fly against the best of them – and win. One of the best flight sims ever seen.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893

**F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR** PCZ #68 • 95%

★ This full-price new version of DID's masterpiece is perhaps a bit of a rip-off for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this one.

PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

**FLIGHT SIM 98** PCZ #55 • 94%

★ Another year, and yet another flight sim to come from the mighty Microsoft. However, this time, with two new aircraft, a helicopter, hundreds of new airports and hugely impressive 3D acceleration, it's really worth having.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

**APACHE HAVOC** PCZ #73 • 94%

★ Of the three main chopper sims available, *Longbow 2* is the one if you're a hard-core sim head, *Team Apache* is the choice for fans whose preference swings the other way, and *Apache Havoc* straddles the gap. And the graphics are to die for.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

**LONGBOW 2** PCZ #59 • 92%

★ "*Longbow 2* is challenging, beautiful, exciting and fun – if you're 3Dfx'd up," we said in our review. If you don't have any extra graphics hardware, there's only one thing to do – think 'upgrade', 'upgrade' and 'upgrade'. It'll be worth the investment.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

**JANE'S F-15** PCZ #64 • 92%

★ A hard-core propeller-head's sim that can stand alongside the awesome *Longbow 2* as one of the most realistic flight sims available. Newbies to the genre might find it a bit overwhelming, but it's worth persevering with.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

**FLYING CORPS GOLD** PCZ #59 • 92%

★ Action-packed WWI flight simulation with neat graphics. Some of you may recall *Red Baron* as one of the greatest WWI flight sims ever – this improves on the old classic to become the best PC WWI sim currently available.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

**A-10 CUBA!** PCZ #59 • 90%

★ Functional graphics for a game that really does capture the imagination, mainly because the plane is an absolute joy to fly. Although it's slightly limited due to a lack of a fully-fledged campaign it's still great fun, as well as being pretty speedy on a modest Pentium.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

**JANE'S WORLD WAR II FIGHTERS** PCZ #72 • 90%

★ It's been a fierce dogfight to see who rules the WWI flight sim skies. *Jane's* combines realism with accessibility and ease, and although the game doesn't have a dynamic campaign feature its graphics make it a clear winner.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

**MIG ALLEY** PCZ #80 • 90%

★ *Mig Alley* gives hardcore flight simmers' piloting skills a run for their money, but don't be put off. If you're willing to put in the work, it will repay you with excellent in-flight graphics and brilliant mission planning elements.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

ALSO
CONSIDER

★ If a flight sim is good, you can bet it'll stay on the shelves for a long time – *Total Air War* being a case in point. Some of the more recent releases worth considering include...

FLIGHT UNLIMITED II Eidos Interactive • PCZ #60 • 84%

AIR WARRIOR III Interactive Magic • PCZ #62 • 80%

F-16 AGGRESSOR Virgin • PCZ #70 • 92%

COMANCHE GOLD NovaLogic • PCZ #65 • 87%

F/A-18 KOREA Empire Interactive • PCZ #61 • 90%

ON THE CD

This month: world exclusive demos of *Battlezone 2* and *Pharaoh*, plus *GP500*, *Freespace 2* and much more

★ WORDS Keith Pullin DISKMEISTER Daniel Emery

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

CD-ROM HELP Phone ABT on 01708 250250 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email pczone@abt-net.demon.co.uk. Please do NOT phone the PC ZONE office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline, please take note of the following points:

- ★ If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- ★ If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- ★ Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- ★ You need at least a Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.
- ★ Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
- ★ Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are Windows 95, DOS and 3D accelerator only.



DEMOS + SHAREWARE



Pro-Indonesian militia in training on Mars, yesterday.

EXCLUSIVE

BATTLEZONE 2

Activision

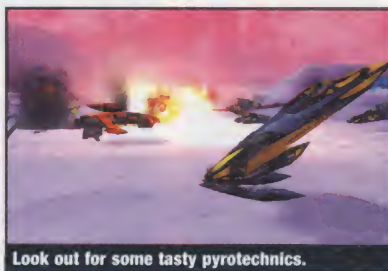
As the lightning flashes and the rain pours down, your mission is to seek out a missing spacecraft and rescue the crew. Forget the fire and the antics of the first *Battlezone* – this latest update of the classic Atari video game allows you to build bases, command wingmen, analyse numerous alien species and generally immerse yourself in one of the most atmospheric worlds ever seen on the PC. If you're not completely gobsmacked by this single-level demo, there's something very, very wrong with your computer.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

- W Forward
- S Reverse
- A Strafe left
- D Strafe right
- E Jump
- H Hop out

LMOUSE Fire

RMOUSE Cycle weapons



Look out for some tasty pyrotechnics.



A small entanglement with the local farmers.

That's it - tea-break, lads.



EXCLUSIVE

PHAROAH

Sierra

Lurking somewhere between *SimCity 3000* and *Age Of Empires* lies *Pharaoh* - the latest god sim from Impressions and sure-fire contender for best strategy game of 1999. The idea is simple: build an empire along the ever-shifting banks of the river Nile with the ultimate goal of uniting Egypt under one flag - yours.

You have to construct homes for your 'family', places to work, temples to worship at, and entertainment to keep them happy. Oh, and there's the odd battle or two along the way. Our world exclusive multi-level demo shows the first few levels in all their frighteningly addictive glory - we simply can't put it down. Play it now and see for yourselves what it's like to become hopelessly devoted to Osiris.

Controls: Mouse



Egypt - the way it should have been built.

GP500

Hasbro Interactive

EXCLUSIVE

Rarely does a motorbike simulation grab the attention of hardened PC racing fanatics. However, if you combine simulation masters MicroProse with the talents of Team Suzuki rider Kenny Roberts Jr, something very special roars on to the screen. Unconvinced? You needn't be. This 3D card-only demo features five bikes to choose from, two racing modes (simulation or arcade), a complete listing of all the current season's riders and the 100 per cent accurate Mugello Grand Prix circuit to test your leathers on. We guarantee this is one demo that'll leave you wheeling. Ho.

Controls: Keyboard/gamepad

ARROWS Left/right, accelerate/brake

1-9 Various camera views



FREESPACE 2

Interplay

Back with a bang, *Freespace 2* is the latest space shooter from Interplay. Boasting wondrous graphical detail, including huge spaceships and amazing fog effects, the full game should be a veritable feast of glorious alien annihilation.

Our stunning demo doesn't skimp on the show either. Go through the training missions and then dive straight into the heart of the action. If you thought *Homeworld* was something to look forward to, you'd better strap yourself into your chair, because you are about to be truly blown away, providing you have a 3D card, of course. Ho hum.

Controls: Keyboard/gamepad

ARROWS Turn left/right, pitch up/down

A Accelerate

Z Decelerate

TAB Boost

T Target

M Match target speed

E Escort

LCTRL Fire primary weapon

SPACE Fire secondary weapon



Watch out for the fog - it's a real pea-souper.



REVENANT

Eidos Interactive
Tasteless slash 'em ups always go down well with us non-moralistic bunch here at *ZONE*, and no doubt you'll feel the same once you get your head round this gore-filled single-level demo from Eidos. Remember: it's not the size of your sword that counts – it's what you do with it.

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard/
mouse
ARROWS Up/down/left/right
A Swing
S Thrust
D Chop
F1 – F4 Spells
R Run
Y Sneak



ABOMINATION: THE NEMESIS PROJECT

Hothouse Creations

This demo lets you get the feel of the first two missions by introducing you to basic attack strategies, and shows off some of the heavy weaponry and body parts you're likely to see flying about. Definitely one for *X-Com*-type action/strategy fans.

Controls: Mouse
F1 – F4 Zoom to character



MIG ALLEY

Empire Interactive
Unadulterated 'Nam dog-fighting action is what you get

with this explosive demo, and frankly it makes you wonder why we get so excited about flight simulations where you have to plan everything to perfection and spend ages equipping your plane.

In this, you simply get a gun, a swarm of MiGs to destroy and an adrenalin rush the size of Vietnam. No messin' – just fightin'. Brilliant stuff.

Controls: Keyboard/joystick
ARROWS Left/right, climb/descend
SPACE Fire guns



CRICKET WORLD CUP 99

Electronic Arts

Now you can sample what is probably the best cricket game ever made. The graphics are stunning and the gameplay is, well, surprisingly fluid. Just try it for yourselves, cricket fans, but make sure you've got that 3D graphics card installed.



Controls: Mouse/keyboard/
gamepad
SPACE View wicket
LMOUSE Bowl/swing bat

STAR WARS: EPISODE 1 - THE PHANTOM MENACE

LucasArts

Something about a couple of Jedis, some robots and this guy

with a painted face who gets chopped in half... Anyway, the game is not selling too well at the moment so LucasArts have released a demo in the hope that people will play it, like it, and then buy the whole game. Give it a whirl – you never know...

Controls: Gamepad/keyboard
ARROWS Left/right, forward/back
CTRL Use weapon
SPACE Use hands



EXTENDED PLAY

Get more out of the games you already own (see Extended Play on page 153)

SETTLERS 3

Settle down and lose yourself in 23 brand new levels for the alluring and addictive *Settlers 3*.

STARSIEGE TRIBES

Get your big metallic head around five brand new maps in Sierra's omnipresent robot romp

INCUBATION

Arise from your slumber, oh, Incubated ones. We've got a shedload of new levels for one of the best turn-based strategy games around.

ATARI ARCADE HITS V1.1
BALDUR'S GATE: TALES OF THE SWORD COAST
BRAVEHEART V3.14
DUNGEON KEEPER 2 BONUS PACKS
DUNGEON KEEPER 2 V1.50
EUROPEAN AIR WAR
FLY! V1.01
FPS: SKI RACING
HALF-LIFE V1.0.1.3
HIDDEN & DANGEROUS V1.1

JAGGED ALLIANCE 2 V1.04
KINGPIN V1.1
PANZER ELITE
SCREAMER 2
SIN V1.06
SPEED BUSTERS
SPORTS CAR GT
STARFLEET COMMAND
STARSIEGE
SUB CULTURE
TA: KINGDOMS V1.1
WARZONE 2100

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Blasting into a store near you at only £29.99

Coming Soon from 'The Collection' by Hasbro Interactive: 'Tycoon Collection' and 'Star Trek: The Next Generation Collection'

Available at all good software retailers



TRAINERS

This month's top ten trainers. These are unofficial third-party programs and there is a chance they could screw up your games, mess up your PC and so on. Always back up any save games and remember: you use trainers at your own risk...

CHAMPIONS OF KRYNN
JAGGED ALLIANCE 2
BATTLECRUISER 3000 AD
A BUG'S LIFE
WARGASM
WILD METAL COUNTRY
VIRTUA SQUAD 2
USM 98-99
TRESPASSER
EXPENDABLE



Expendable.



EDITORIAL

We couldn't cram this stuff anywhere else, so we've shoehorned it in here

Tips and solutions PC ZONE's massive hints and cheats database continues to expand.

Championship Manager 3 update The most reliable update for the instant classic in football management. All the teams in every European division are in the right league and playing in the right competitions for the 1999-2000 season, plus all the latest transfers of players you've never even heard of, and some you have. Good riddance, Nicol-ar-se...

Hot Shots The highly anticipated *Ultima Ascension*, the last and surely the best in the series, will cause quite a stir in the RPG community. Here is a trailer to whet your appetite.



Ultima Ascension: let's see you swat that, then.



ADDED EXTRAS

Check out this month's selection of tools and utilities

DirectX 6.1

Microsoft's latest drivers for most Windows 95/98 games.

DirectX Media 6.0 Patch

Fixes two problems in the original release of DirectX Media 6.0.

Voodoo3 drivers

We recommend you use the drivers provided by your board manufacturer.

MiniGL 1.48 drivers

For use with games requiring OpenGL on Voodoo3 systems.

TreeSize Professional v2.2

A powerful and flexible hard disk manager.

EZDesk 1.8

Saves the position of your Windows 95/98 desktop shortcuts and folders.

FileView v2.1

Hex/ASCII viewer for binary files.

Hypersnap-DX Pro v3.41.00

Screen-capture utility which can cope with DirectX/Direct 3D and 3Dfx modes.

Scitech Display Doctor v6.53

The latest release of the universal graphics card utility.

Winzip 7.0

The ultimate ZIP utility for Windows.

Quick Time 3

The standard in digital video.

Windows Media Player

Play the Web's coolest audio and video. You'll also need it to view this month's Hot Shots MPEG movie.

Hyper Terminal Private Edition 4.0

A more powerful version of Windows Hyper Terminal

DUN Manager 1.1f

Simplify and enhance Dial-Up Networking and Remote Access Terminal

Ameol v2.50

Brand new software for the excellent online service that is CIX.

MPlayer

Excellent free online gaming software.

Kali95 1.63

Latest version of the client software for playing games over the Internet.

TimeOnline v1.10e

Simple and effective way to track your Net time.

GetRight 3.3.4

Salvage broken downloads. New version.

ICQ 99a beta v 2.13 Build #1700

Client software for the best online chat service in the world.

GameSpy 2.08

Find all the latest servers playing your favourite games.

AOLpress

Website-building utility that's simple to use and very powerful.

Decode Shell Extension v 4.1

Decode e-mail attachments by right-clicking on a saved message file.

NavEx 2.0.1

Converts Navigator Bookmarks into Explorer Favourites and vice-versa.

FTP Explorer 1.0010

Explorer-type FTP interface.

Roger Wilco

A virtual walkie-talkie app that runs alongside your favourite multiplayer online games.

Wireplay Client 2.3

The latest software that connects you to Wireplay, plus the games *Push & Shove*, *Wild West*, *MUD II*, *Dalmatian Pirates* and *Big Red Racing* to play on it.



94% PC Zone
93% Ultimate PC

95% PC Gamer

90% PC Zone



the collection

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GIVE YOU CASH!**

**WE'LL BUY FROM YOU!
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How does it work?

Take a look at the example below, this shows price for Kingpin.
You've got one and want to trade it in. So, you can use this Guide to
let you know how much we will offer you for it. **Example only:**

KINGPIN:

WE BUY FOR CASH AT: £12.00

WE BUY FOR PART-EX AT: £16.00

WE SELL AT: £25.00



IT'S SO EASY!

If you have never traded with us before you will be required to join
our Membership Club and we'll need two pieces of identification from
you. Take a look at the Rules of Membership poster instore for details.
Don't forget: all goods traded in will be fully checked before you can
get your cash or credit.

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS OUR CURRENT PRICE TODAY, BUT PRICES
CHANGE ON A DAILY BASIS. CALL TO CONFIRM CURRENT GAMES
PRICES.**

**LARA
TRADED
IN FOR BALD
PSYCHO!**

ANOTHER
CEX
SHOCKAAH!



A bald psycho, yesterday



DRIVER



DESCENT



DRAKAN



PM RACE



OUTCAST



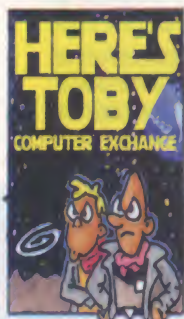
QUAKE



STAR WARS 1



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS



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COMPUTER exchange

THE COMPUTER GAMES SPECIALISTS

EXTENDED PLAY



New levels for Blue Byte's turn-based masterpiece, *Incubation*, as well as playable arenas for *Starsiege: Tribes* and maps for *Settlers 3*

WORDS Phil Wand

TRY IT YOURSELF



On this month's cover CD we've got all the official patches, bug fixes, utilities and map editors we could find, including all the ones mentioned in these pages. To track them down, use the CD browser to go to the Patches section. All the patches are listed with a brief description and any relevant documentation. Make sure you read any associated README files for information on how to install individual patches. For further help, turn to our CD pages, starting on page 148.

INCUBATION

Fourteen new single-player, co-op and deathmatch levels

Blue Byte's *Incubation* (PCZ #56, 94%) is a truly splendid fast-paced, turn-based action game.

Not only does it dribble atmosphere from every opening (it looks and plays like the result of a collaboration between iD Software, Games Workshop and HR Giger), but there are also a number of interminably cute features, such as the play-by-mail system and absorbing multiplayer levels.

If you liked the *X-COM* series, you'll probably pop a blood vessel over *Incubation*.

The missions we've collected require that you have both *Incubation: Time Is Running Out* and *The Wilderness Missions*.

LET'S ROCK (rddpinc1.zip)



Objective: Marines must reach the extraction point before the power station is flooded with radiation. Single player.

Your squad has become trapped in a critically damaged power station while attempting to locate missing civilians. Emergency venting is in progress, but it will not stop the station from eventually being flooded with

lethal radiation. And to make matters worse, Ray'Ther are hot on your heels.

MAD SCIENTIST (rddpinc2.zip)



Objective: Eliminate the mad scientist. Single player.

A mad scientist has been leading a project to research methods of controlling Scay'Ger. Six days ago, he disappeared, along with a number of genetically altered Scay'Ger, and he's currently holed up in a derelict alien outpost in the jungle.

Nobody knows what he's up to, but he must be stopped. Heavy resistance is expected.

BUG BALL (rddpinc3.zip)



Objective: Score points by pushing the green spike into your opponent's score zone. Co-op.

Click on 'deploy units' when you've read the briefing file, then click on the 'end of turn/next turn' button. Player 1 controls a team of purple Bea'Coo and scores by pushing the ball into the northern scoring zone. Player 2 controls a team of green Bea'Ther and scores by pushing the ball into the southern scoring zone. The ball itself is represented by a green spike. The first player to score five times is the winner.

BREAKOUT (rddpinc4.zip)



Objective: Open doors to all the containment cells. Get the mad scientist and seven other Scay'Ger into the red area in the south. Single player.

The military is attempting to take over your research project. You have decided to liberate your test subjects and continue your research at a secret location. Your mission will fail if the scientist is killed, or if you have less than seven Scay'Ger left, or the military reinforcements arrive on turn 40.

COMPUTER CORE (rddpinc5.zip)



Objective: Deactivate the main systems by activating five switches, then reboot the system using the two reboot switches. Single player.

Scay'Ger have captured the control room of an important refinery. To regain command, your squad must shut down the systems and reboot the computer core. The level has several defence grids positioned at strategic locations throughout.

It is believed that a group of Gore'Coo have reprogrammed the system to target human life forms.

BOMBER (rddpinc6.zip)



Objective: Reactivate the cloaking field by using the four switches in the north-east before the end of turn 20. Destroy all the air vents and eliminate all Scay'Ger. Single player.

Scay'Ger have invaded a secret manufacturing base where a prototype Stealth Bomber is

EXTENDED PLAY BOOKMARKS

Incubation www.mlink.net/~matthieu/incubation

Official Incubation Site www.bluebyte.com

Settlers www.settlers.net

Official Settlers Site www.settlers3.com

420ville Tribes Maps www.420ville.com/tribes/maps.html

Official Tribes Site www.starsiegetribes.com

under construction. They've damaged several systems, including a cloaking field generator whose purpose was to conceal the base from enemy spy satellites. Your squad's priority is to reactivate the generators before any satellites pass within observation range. Before the mission commences, your squad will rendezvous with two marines who were forced to evacuate the base when the invasion occurred.

DEATHMATCH PACK ONE (rddpinc7.zip)



Objective: A deathmatch level for two to four players.

There are five variations included in this pack, allowing you to choose the style of deathmatch level you prefer.

REACTOR SIEGE (rddpinc8.zip)



Objective: Activate the emergency vents by using the switches located in the bowels of the plant. Having done this, any surviving marines should then head for the extraction area. Single player.

Scay'Ger have invaded a nuclear reactor plant and caused a considerable amount of damage. Most of the damage

occurred to the reactor's automated cooling system and, as a result, the reactor will reach critical temperature soon. Someone is going to have to enter the facility and manually activate the emergency venting systems. Activating these systems should buy enough time for a 'clean-up' squad to eliminate the Scay'Ger, and for a maintenance team to repair the main cooling system.

DEATHMATCH PACK TWO (rddpinc10.zip)



Objective: A deathmatch level for between two and four players.

There are five variations included in this pack, allowing you to choose the style of deathmatch level you prefer.

XMAS98 (rddpinc11.zip)



Objective: Deliver one present to each house where the occupants have been good. To do this, position a 'present' (crate) in one of the two adjoining red areas beside each specified house. Then get your squad to the extraction area. Single player.

It's Christmas Eve and the Scay'Ger have ambushed Santa. Your squad must step in and see all the presents get delivered.



← They must deliver ten presents. If the number of presents in the mission area falls below ten, you will fail the mission.

★ VACCINE RUN (rddpinc12.zip)



Objective: Get five crates to the red area in the south. Single player.

A medical storage facility has been overrun by Scay'Ger. Your squad must retrieve five crates of the desperately-needed vaccine. They will fail the mission if the

number of crates in the entire mission area falls below five.

★ FAMILY BUSINESS (rddpinc13.zip)



Objective: Destroy the War'Coo by positioning six of your Scay'Ger in the red area. This will direct the temples' power back at its guardian. Single player.

A group of rival Scay'Ger have been causing your tribe a lot of bother over the past few months. You have had enough and have

decided to put these antagonists in their place. Your Scay'Ger must invade one of the enemy's temples and destroy the temple guardian.

★ TRICKY SQUARES (rddpinc14.zip)



Objective: Capture all areas marked 'A'. To do this, simply stand on, or walk over, the marked areas. Single player.

This is an abstract level and we can't think of a scenario to

accompany it – well, not one that would sound plausible! Your squad finds themselves in an area consisting mainly of large square floor tiles suspended over a big hole.

There are 12 tiles marked 'A', and your squad must capture these tiles. But be warned – some of these tiles are unstable. If too much weight is put on any one tile, it may collapse and fall into the depths below.

★ SURVIVAL (rddpinc15.zip)



Objective: Get your marines to the red area. Single player.

Your marine company had been deployed to retake a manufacturing plant which had been invaded by the Scay'Ger.

This mission was an important one, for two reasons – first, because this plant is crucial to the war effort, and second, because it was believed that plant workers were still alive within the facility.

Unfortunately, the Scay'Ger forces had been hugely underestimated and your company was faced with overwhelming odds.

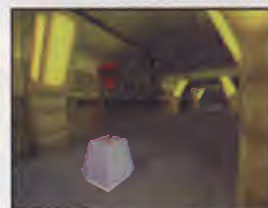
Out of ammo and forced to retreat, only a handful of marines survived to get within sight of the extraction area.

STARSIEGE TRIBES

★ New levels for Tribes players

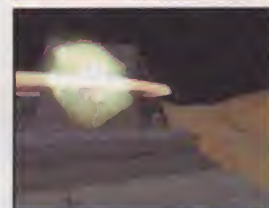
Starsiege: Tribes (PCZ#76, 88%) proves that an online-only game can work. It offers a simple concept, simple rules and simple gameplay. Although the graphics engine is simple too, it's also slick and fast – and it works. Lag is near zero, even over the lumpiest of connections. Arenas are massive, yet never suffer from slowdown or pop-up and are capable of supporting huge numbers of players. A big hit in the States and Europe, *Tribes* will continue to gain momentum as the launch of *Tribes 2* draws ever nearer.

★ STRONGHOLD (stronghold.zip)



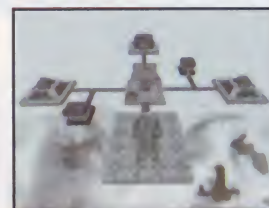
A CTF conversion of the Defend 'n' Destroy map, *Bloody Vengeance*. There's a floating offensive support platform and a sniper bunker, and some interior stations have been rearranged. Added solar panels make the defensive turrets harder to disable from afar.

★ CHECKSIX (checksix.zip)



A CTF conversion of the Defend 'n' Destroy map, *Siege*. The developers have added a force field in the main flag room and a sniper tower between the two bases. Inventory stations have been removed from the bases – the only stations now exist in a central tower.

★ WALKTHECAT (walkthecat.zip)



A floating arena of small buildings connected by catwalks. Each building is either an objective or a flag base.

The action is fast and furious here and, if you don't defend your flag well, you will fall behind quickly.

★ DESTROYERS (destroyers.zip)



Two floating citadels from the original *Destroyers* map, refitted with plasma turrets. Good base defence is key. Each team has one forward staging base to aid in their offensive towards the flag. There are long distances between bases, so teamwork is essential.

★ MATTERHORN (matterhorn.zip)



Although the snowy landscape is borrowed from the original *Snowblind* map, the rest is custom.

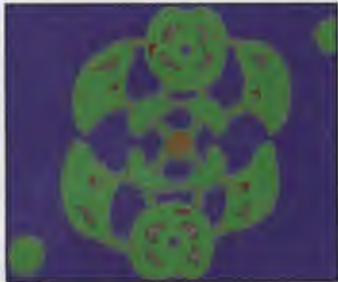
The name *Matterhorn* derives from the two bases which are built on to the side of large cliffs, which encourage skiing along the icy surface.

SETTLERS 3

☛ Hods of new maps for the frontiersmen among you

Where Bullfrog games give you the feeling that they're capable of getting along just fine without you wagging the mouse and tapping the keyboard, *Settlers 3* (PCZ #72, 88%) makes you feel you're needed – as though you're truly in charge of things. In that respect, it's a more involving game than, say, *Populous* or *Dungeon Keeper*. So for all the mad colony builders among you, we've collected more than 20 new maps for you to plug in and play.

☛ 3v3 TEAMWORK (3v3teamwork.zip)



RATING: ★★★★★

☛ ARCHIPELAGO (arch.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ BALANCE OF POWER (bop.zip)



RATING: ★★★★★

☛ DEATH VALLEY (dvalley.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ FREE AS A BIRD (freeasa.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

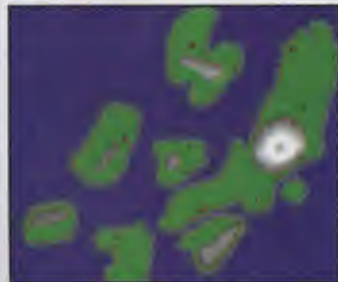
☛ ISLAND CONFLICT (islandc.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ ISLAND MAZE (islandm.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ JAPAN (japan.zip)



RATING: ★★★★★

☛ LINKWAY (linkway.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ LOOKOUT (lookout.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ LOOKOUT 2 (lookout2.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

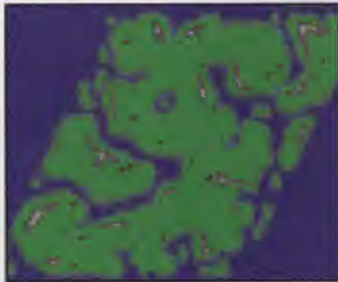
☛ LUNGSTONSM (lung.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ MIDDLES PEAK (middlespeak.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ MYSTICAL ISLANDS (misland.zip)



RATING: ★★★★★

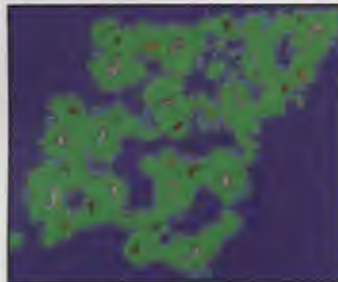
☛ MOUNTAIN RANGE (mrange.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ MINE THE CENTER (mtc.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ RIVER DELTA (rdelta.zip)



RATING: ★★★★★

☛ ROCK BELT (rockbelt.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

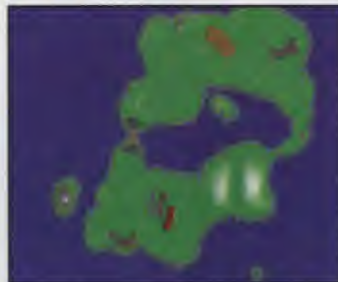
☛ SAVE THE PIG (savepig.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ SALT LAKE CITY (slc.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ SPLIT MOUNTAIN (smount.zip)



RATING: ★★★★★

☛ UNKNOWN ISLAND (unisland.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

☛ VOLCANIC ISLE (vocisle.zip)

RATING: ★★★★★

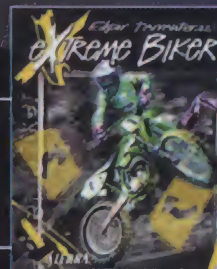
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THE DIGITAL VILLAGE

Contrary to popular belief, there was more than just a famous sci-fi author behind the last of the point-and-click-adventures. *Paul Presley* treks to Covent Garden to meet the rest of the team

Despite the fact that my idea to have them strike the famous 'YMCA' pose didn't go down too well (meaning I couldn't use 'The Digital Village People' as a headline), the team responsible for *Starship Titanic*, the last of the old school adventure games, and the forthcoming (but not for a good while yet) *Hitch Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy* game are more than willing to put themselves out for us. Living under a famous name's shadow is never easy, but when the shadow not only owns your company but also helps create your product, it must be harder than ever to get some of the attention focused on yourselves.

The Digital Village was created in 1997 by Douglas Adams, partly as a software development house and partly as a way for the author to explore a new technological medium as a part of his art. It soon became clear that games were the path to success and so *Starship Titanic* was born. However, every man and his dog has interviewed Adams by now (including yours truly). The real story lies with the four men chiefly responsible for actually programming the game: Adam Shaikh, Tim Browse, Jason Williams and Mike Kenny.

How much freedom do you have? Can you go off and start your own projects or do they always have to be Douglas Adams-related?

Tim: After *Hitch Hiker's* the next game probably won't be exploiting a Douglas Adams property – just for the sake of variety and also because he doesn't want us just to be churning out Douglas Adams licences all over the place. *Hitch Hiker's* was an obvious title because of the movie and because it

works quite well as a game. So that was a reasonable decision. There was talk of a Dirk Gently game at one point, but we want the next title to be something of our own creation.

We've heard that Douglas comes up with an awful lot of ideas. Are there ever times when you'll just say, "No. That's not going to happen"? **All:** (Laughing) Yes.

Adam: Especially at the end of *Starship Titanic* when we were working every hour of the day, seven days a week. Sometimes they'll be better ideas than the ones we'd had, but there comes a point when you have to finish the game.

on the installer, and so on. At that point, it just becomes noise in the background.

WRITER'S BLOCK

When *Starship Titanic* was released last year, it contained a feature that hadn't been seen in adventure games for a long, long time. Text. The ability to actually type in commands in plain English. For the most part it worked pretty well, but with adventure games now rapidly entering the all-singing, all-dancing world of three-dimensional action, weren't they running the risk of being left behind before they'd even got started?

“It's that much more difficult to write games that make the player care”

ADAM SHAIKH, PROJECT LEADER

Mike: That's one of the problems with creative environments. Once you've moved from the design and planning stage to the implementation phases, you're still going to be getting a lot of new ideas coming in. Even six months into the programming that was still happening, when you're just trying to finish everything up and work

Starship Titanic was one of the last of the old school point-and-click-adventures. What's happened to the genre?

Jason: Everything's going 3D, basically. It's got to the point where you can do a 3D action adventure like *Tomb Raider*, which has a lot of the classic adventure game elements – lots of puzzles to solve, ➔

← and so on – but within a proper, immersive 3D environment. You can't really go back to the good old days of the text adventure, despite the fact it's a really cool genre. It's like books. Books haven't disappeared just because TV's come along, but not everyone will carry on reading if they can just watch the TV show.

You were trying to keep a foot in the past with the text-input conversations, though.

Jason: Yeah, we were trying to merge the 3D graphics with the better elements of the old text adventures. We wanted the player to have to think his way through the puzzles. That's what's happening to the genre. In *Half-Life* you get a really good built-in storyline, which gives you complex puzzles and things to think about rather than just going around shooting at monsters. The elements are all-combining, so that you can actually feel as though you're in these amazing worlds where these amazing things are happening.

Tim: We're moving towards action games with adventure game status. What I've played of *Outcast* takes it even further than *Half-Life*. It has the same kinds of things that you'd traditionally do in a point-and-click adventure – all the object manipulation and the dialogue trees. It's a really good 3D adventure. It's not a traditional *Quake*-type game where you have a fairly linear progression through the levels – and I think *Half-Life* was still a bit like that – here you're basically given five worlds and you're told to find out what's going on.

Is this total freedom a good thing? How do you avoid the problem of the player becoming totally lost?

Tim: They manage it quite well in *Outcast* by having a lot of 'prompting'. If you find yourself running around aimlessly, quite often one of the characters will run up to you with something to say, which keeps the game going. I didn't really feel as though I never knew what to do next. It can be a problem. With some of the big *Tomb Raider* levels, sometimes you feel as though you just can't be bothered working it out.

Adam: It's like having an arena with two million square kilometres of land that leaves you thinking, 'Well, I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing now'.

Jason: It's finding the balance between having something that's totally linear where stuff happens and you just go along with it, and something that offers enough choice to do whatever you feel like. If you give players too much choice it can be just as bad as forcing them to go down a particular route.

Mike: Non-intrusive guidance.

Adam: Also, if you're trying to create something with a good storyline, you have to be somewhat linear – things need to happen in the right places and in the right order. You have to keep much tighter control. *Half-Life* is a very linear game because so many things have to happen at the right time.

Jason: They did a good job on *Half-Life* because although things felt very, very linear all the way through, you never felt constrained by that linearity.

Adam: They drew you on very well. You really wanted to progress.

Jason: Right. The fact that it was a linear progression didn't worry you. A lot of games that are linear in that way make you feel, 'Right, I'll just walk along this corridor and the next thing will happen and I'll deal with that'. You don't feel as though you have any control. You might as well just

press the Go button and sit back and watch it since you don't have much say in things anyway.

Adam: One of the big things about the adventure game genre is that it's been going for a long time without any major changes. Other genres have progressed in big ways, but adventures are pretty much still at the same stage as they were in the days of *Monkey Island* or *Maniac Mansion*, back in the mid-'80s.

Tim: Those games stand up a lot better over time than other genres too.

Adam: That's right, and that's because there hasn't been much of a progression. If you take something like *R-Type* and compare it to *Quake*, it's a whole step up in experience. Adventure games now are the same as they were ten to fifteen years ago and

“Developers need to get less fascinated with new technology. They rush to be the first ones to use it”

ADAM SHAIKH, PROJECT LEADER

they'll stay that way until you get to the stage of creating proper, believable situations. The amount of times you get things like, 'Right, I've got a bowling ball and I need to get into this locked house but I don't have a key. I should be able to just smash the window with the bowling ball, but for some reason the game won't let me'. That's the next stage that adventure games have to reach. You have to be able to think for yourself and anything that makes sense to you should also make sense within the game. Unfortunately, that's also a much bigger step up than going from a 2D shoot 'em up to a 3D shoot 'em up.



GROWING UP

One of the impressions that you get from The Digital Village, at least from looking at Starship Titanic, is that they're aiming for a more mature kind of gaming experience than the typical gore 'em ups we see today. Is there such a thing as an adult game, or are we kidding ourselves if we think the gamer wants anything more than just blood and violence?

Quick poll. Which adventure game have you most enjoyed playing?

Tim: Apart from the old text adventures, probably *Monkey Island*.

Adam: Yeah, probably *Zork* or *Monkey Island*.

The reason I ask is that it seems to me that the most popular kinds of adventures are the comedy ones. There's very little in the way of emotional drama in adventure games. Is it fair to say that if you can make them laugh, you can fudge your way through anything?

Adam: It's that much more difficult to write games that make the player care.

Tim: One of the writers we had on *Starship Titanic* was Michael Bywater, who worked on a game called *Planetfall* for Infocom which had a sidekick character called Floyd. He was really stupid and would follow you around, constantly fiddling with things and screwing things up. But there was one part near the end where you had to send Floyd into a nuclear reactor to get something for you, and you knew that this would mean he would die. Michael told us that people had a really strong emotional attachment to that. When they realised that they had to send Floyd in to die, they didn't want to do it.

Adam: A lot of people just stopped the game there.

Tim: That was interesting.

Was that emotion, or was it just that people thought it might not be the solution?

Mike: No, it was real empathy with the character.

Adam: The way to do that is to spend a long time with the characters. The most recent experience I've had of that nature was with *Final Fantasy VII* – when one of the characters dies and there's a whole cut-scene. If you're involved with characters for any prolonged period of time, it becomes an emotional involvement. It's the same with films.

There's now a lot of controversy (again) about the level of violence in games, but is there room for a more mature kind of adult game?

Adam: I'm sure there is. Look at the first generation of games players: these people are now all in their mid-to-late twenties. Look at most game developers: they're all in their late twenties or early thirties and they love playing games.

Will we see a game that actually makes you cry?

Tim: (Laughs) Yeah, Sin.

Not those kind of tears. I mean, is there room for, say, a romantic game?

Jason: Possibly. These days there are a lot more people who have access to computers. When I was younger, a computer was a specialist pursuit and gamers were pretty much just ten-year-old boys. Nowadays even my mother, my father and my sister have email... and that scares me. These are people who have never had anything to do with computers before, they don't understand them at all, yet they're all on the Net. Computers are available to the masses now rather than just to a very select, specific audience.



(From left to right) Mike Kenny, Jason Williams, Tim Browse and Adam Shalkh.



The men behind the scenes have their 15 minutes.



TDV's one game to date, *Starship Titanic* (above & far left).



Will the public accept a different Arthur Dent?



⬆ ➡ Can TDV emerge from the Douglas Adams shadow?

Mike: Now games are far more sophisticated and the market is much broader. Much more 'grown-up'.
Tim: There's less of that old 'Why are you wasting your time playing games? Now be quiet, I'm watching TV' situation.

A lot of developers like to make the comparison between games and films. Some might argue that we're still in the brainless action movie stage of development at the moment. How do we make the leap to intellectual respectability?

Adam: Developers need to get less fascinated with technology. When a new piece of hardware arrives, a lot of developers think 'Ooh, technology!' and all rush to be the first ones to use it.

Mike: That comes over in the games too.

Adam: For a while the technology becomes the most important thing in the games. It's only once everyone's at the same level that people start to really settle down and explore the actual games.

The problem over the last few years is that 3D technology has been improving so quickly, that every time a new game is released it has to be technically better than the one that came before. We're still rushing along the technology road at the moment, but we're almost at the stage where it's powerful enough for people to do whatever they want and it won't be long before people start concentrating on the other sides of game design.

Mike: It's been a challenge over the last two years to ask ourselves, 'Can we set this environment up with the technology we have and make the characters move around sensibly and solve all the complex problems?' Once the teams involved have managed to create the technology necessary to do all that, they've generally run out of time to work on the actual game itself. Another reason *Half-Life* worked was that they were able to buy in the technology and spend all their time working on the

gameplay. Hopefully, we're now at the point where we'll be seeing a lot of great games released that are based on technology that's been continually developed over the last couple of years.

Tim: Take *Messiah*, for instance. I've heard nothing about *Messiah* other than how great the technology is. I don't know what the game is about. I'm not sure that Shiny do either.

Mike: I just think we need to employ better writers and more creative people.

Perhaps that's the biggest advantage that Douglas Adams offers the team – the ability to tap into a creative, literary mind at will. It'll be a while before they get to explore this option fully; the *Hitch Hiker's* game isn't going to be with us until next year at the earliest. But it will be interesting to see what they can come up with and just how they utilise their founder's expertise as a result. And perhaps by then they'll be comfortable enough to strike the YMCA pose. [W]

COMMENT



Good things may come in small packages, but PC games come in grotesquely huge ones. Size has nothing to do with performance, argues **Charlie Brooker**

★ **PACKING IT IN** Charlie Brooker

BOXING STUPID

You know the problem with PC games? They try to offer you too much value for money.

Buh? Wuh? Suh? What was that? *Too much* value for money? Have I taken leave of my senses? No. Sit down and listen.

Okay. Games are far too expensive. We all know that.

“What if Mars Bars were sold inside wrappers twenty times the size of the bar itself, so actually trying to get your hands on the chocolate itself was like hunting for a turd in a sleeping bag?”

Software publishers can bang on about recouping their development costs and the damage done by piracy until the sun implodes, and they'll still be a bunch of blinkered liars: games cost too much money, *full stop*. What's more, they know it. That's why games have to pretend to be better value than they actually are. Hence the

packaging – half the boxes are as big as a family-size Persil Automatic carton. Open one up and it's like gazing into an empty white cupboard. Talk about unused storage space – drop one in a West End shop doorway and within two hours a drunken care-in-the-community patient would move in. And there'd be room for his dog.

Come to think of it, there'd be room for him to grab his dog by the tail and swing it around, which would probably be the most fun either had had in years.

WHY, I OUGHTA...

Oooh, them *damn* boxes. It's the retail equivalent of a peacock's tail feathers. Nothing but unnecessary

plumage. And who's paying for all that laminated cardboard? You are, knucklehead, each time you fork out your £34.99.

Of course, if *everything else* came in packaging like that, the public wouldn't stand for it. What if Mars Bars were sold inside wrappers twenty times the size of the bar itself, so actually trying to get your hands on the chocolate itself was like hunting for a turd in a sleeping bag? What if you bought a can of Coke the size of an oil drum and popped it open to discover half a mouthful swilling round the bottom like dirty rainwater in a dustbin? Or a newspaper the size of a king-size bedsheet, with huge blank margins and a regular-size rectangle of print in the centre of each page. And that's just your average local newsagent's – imagine the chaos at an out-of-town supermarket. We'd need supermarkets the size of cities, houses the size of tower blocks, and kitchen cabinets the size of Eddie

Stobart juggernauts. Not to mention huge robotic exo-skeletons and cargo helicopters to help us shift it all around. There'd be rioting in the streets within a week (although, of course, using a petrol bomb would be a logistical nightmare in which a team of nine had to fill a bottle the size of a submarine, stuff a burning duvet down the neck, then use a gigantic medieval catapult to hurl it at the police, who'd be defending themselves by standing inside gigantic perspex Tic-Tac boxes).

STOP THE MADNESS

So why don't PC games publishers just stop bloody doing it? Answer – because everyone else is. The situation's been going on for so long now, it's become accepted practice. Of course, it *used* to make sense – in the days before in-game tutorials and online help, we were lumbered with manuals the size of *Kay's Catalogue* (but with fewer photos of Australian soap stars in their underwear). And let's not forget the days before CD-ROM drives became the standard, and technically-advanced releases came spread across a collection of 86 floppy disks, which cascaded all over your lap like a stream of plastic pub

☺ Nice box. Bung in an electric hob and a cracked toilet and you could rent it out in London for £890 a week.



coasters when you opened the lid. You *needed* a huge box to keep them in.

Nowadays, there's no excuse. Trouble is, no-one wants to be the first to bring out a game in a standard CD-sized case, for fear of being lost on the shelves. Thankfully, the days of *no packaging at all* (when all new software is downloaded directly from the Internet) are getting closer – but until then, unless the government declares an amnesty on outsize cartons, it's down to us consumers to take direct action.

Give the manufacturers a taste of their own medicine. Write a letter of complaint – but write it in tiny letters in the centre of the largest sheet of paper you can find, fold it into a small cube and place it in the bottom of the box your television came in. Then post it to them. It may cost a small fortune, but if enough people do it, within two weeks the Post Office will be phoning them up to ask what the hell's going on. And they'll have to explain. And then the Post Office will call them a bunch of stupid bastards and slam down the phone and the publishers will slouch away feeling a bit silly and stupid. Not to mention chastened.

Or perhaps they won't give a toss. Still. Only one way to find out. Go on. I dare you. ☹



PC games boxes will get bigger and bigger until... well... *this* will happen.

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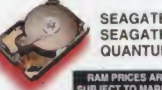
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